ROMAN THEATRE BUILDINGS IN THE NEAR EAST: A NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION APPROACH TO FUNCTION

A Thesis Submitted to the College of

Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts

in the Department of Archaeology

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the ways in which a selected number of Roman theatre buildings in the Near East and their urban contexts communicated nonverbally with individuals and groups in daily contact with them. The theatre at Caesarea, the South Theatre at Gerasa, and the large theatre at Scythopolis serve as case studies for the application of a nonverbal communication approach. These three theatres provide a sample representative of the period from the introduction of theatres to the region in the first century BC to the end of the major period of their construction in the third century AD. By applying a nonverbal communication approach, this thesis challenges the view that topography was the sole determining factor in the placement of theatres within sites. The location of theatres was selected to enhance their intended function, including both the way they were used and the way they influenced behaviour. Nonverbal cues were embedded in the structural components and spatial positioning of the theatres and in their spatial interrelationships with surrounding structures. These cues, once received and interpreted, communicated meanings that influenced the behaviour of individuals and groups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Alison Maingon, for all her guidance, assistance, and feedback throughout the preparation of this thesis, and especially for her constant interest in my work. I also wish to thank my advisory committee, Dr. Chris Foley and Dr. John Porter, for their feedback and advice.

The Department of Archaeology at the University of Saskatchewan provided much appreciated funding during the initial years of this project. I also wish to thank the Department of Archaeology and Dr. Chris Foley for the opportunity to participate in the Wadi ath-Thamad Project in 1998, which gave me the opportunity to observe and photograph several theatres in Jordan.

The staff of the Interlibrary Loans Department of the University of Saskatchewan library was especially helpful in obtaining materials on short notice and receive my heartfelt thanks for all their assistance.

I also wish to thank my family for their constant prayers, advice, and support throughout my university experience thus far. Special thanks goes to my sister Rhonda for all her help in the final stages of the preparation of this thesis.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents

for their constant prayers, love, and support

and to Dr. Alison Maingon

for all her help and guidance as a friend and mentor.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The study of Roman theatre buildings in the Near East has taken many forms. Much of the focus has been on elements of design, but there has been little emphasis on the location of theatres within sites and what structures are situated in their vicinity. No previous work has focused primarily on the urban contexts in which theatres are found and how these contexts affect their use. This thesis will rectify that omission. I will be applying a nonverbal communication approach to identify cues embedded in the placement of theatres within sites, the surrounding structures, and how the theatres and these neighbouring buildings interrelate, in order to draw inferences about the various ways in which specific theatre buildings functioned. In the context of this study, the term "function" includes both the way theatres were used and the way they influenced the behaviour of individuals and groups. This thesis concentrates mainly on the latter definition of function.

I will be focusing primarily on the archaeological evidence through the examination of site plans, photographs, reconstructions, and site reports. The study of the spatial positioning and interrelationships will include an examination of the layout of streets, topography, the placement of structures, their orientation, and the various ways of accessing buildings, which will illuminate the ways in which the theatres in the region affected behaviour. I will also examine the structural components of the theatre

buildings, which incorporated nonverbal cues that expressed meanings. Where applicable, I will make use of epigraphic and literary evidence.

Roman theatres have been discovered in various states of preservation at 25 sites in the region (Figure 1). The geographic limits of my study are defined in part by the ancient political divisions in the Roman Near East. My case studies derive from the area that included the province of Palestine, which incorporated the previous kingdom of Judaea, and the province of Arabia, which included the previous Nabataean kingdom. Some of the sites, such as Scythopolis and Gerasa, were originally part of the province of Syria.

I will examine theatres constructed between the first century BC and the third century AD, primarily dealing with the period of their construction and initial use. Roman theatres were introduced to the region of the Near East in the first century BC, with the building projects of Herod the Great. According to Josephus, he constructed theatres in Caesarea (*JW* 1.21.8), Jerusalem (*JA* 15.8.1), Jericho (*JA* 17.6.3), and Damascus (*JW* 1.21.11) during this time, although those at Jerusalem and Damascus are only known through this literary evidence at present. The Nabataeans built theatres at Sahir, Petra, Wadi Sabra, and Elusa in the first century AD, with those at Sepphoris and Pella, as well as the South Theatre at Gerasa also dating to this time. The theatres at Bostra, Kanawat, Neapolis, Philadelphia, and the North Theatre at Gerasa were erected in the second century AD. The large and small theatres at Scythopolis date to the late second or early third century AD, as do the theatres at Hammat-Gader, Dor, Legio, and Birketein. The theatres at Philippopolis, Shuni, Adraa, and Sebaste were constructed in the third century AD, while the one at Antipatris is dated to the late third or early fourth

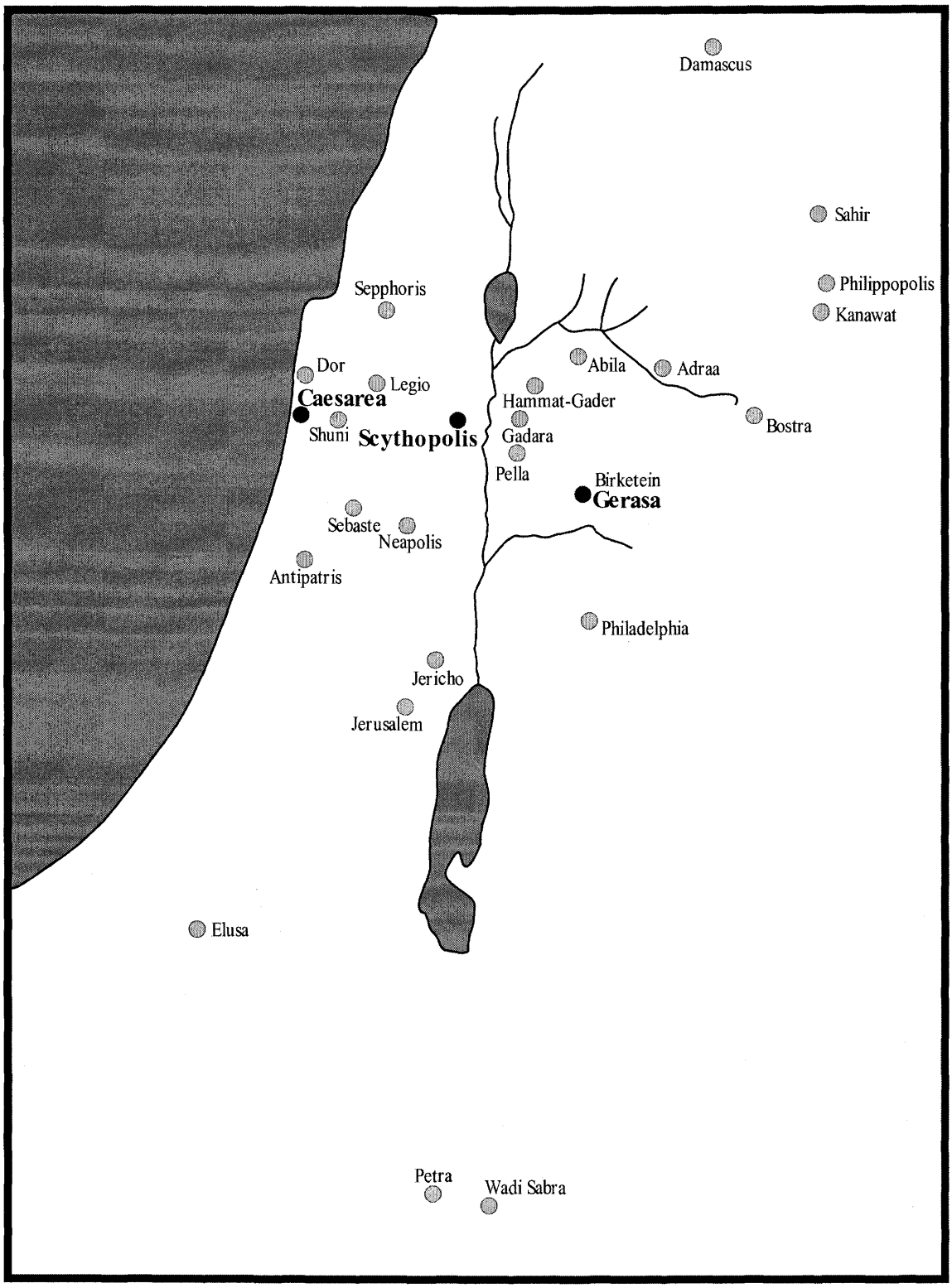

Figure 1: Distribution of Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia

century AD. Both the North and West Theatres at Gadara[1] and the theatre at Abila are currently undated.[2] My specific case studies will deal with the theatre at Caesarea, the South Theatre at Gerasa, and the large theatre at Scythopolis.

1.1 Previous scholarship

Roman theatres in the Near East have been the subject of previous study. Margaret Bieber's book *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater*, the second edition of which was published in 1961, focused on the development of theatre buildings from their early Greek beginnings, through the Hellenistic period, and into the time of the Roman Republic and ultimately the Roman Empire. She distinguished between those regions in which theatres were designed along purely Roman principles, including North Africa and Arabia, and those in which they were influenced by previously existing Greek and Hellenistic structures, including Greece and Asia Minor. She concentrated primarily on the design of theatre buildings and on the differences between the Greek and Roman structures.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, Edmond Frézouls conducted research on Roman theatres in the Near East, although he exclusively dealt with those located in Syria. He focused largely on elements of design (Frézouls 1982:343-441). He did examine the placement of theatres within sites to a certain extent, and he concluded that this placement did not follow a specific set of rules (Frézouls 1989:405-406).

In the 1980s and 1990s, Arthur Segal carried out research on theatres in Roman Palestine and Arabia (Segal 1985/88, 1995), as well as research on Roman town

[1] The excavators have provisionally suggested that the West Theatre at Gadara dates to the second century AD (Retzleff 2001:84).
[2] For descriptions of all the theatres, see Retzleff (2001) and Segal (1995).

planning in the region (Segal 1988). In his book *Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia* (1995), he divided the theatres into four categories on the basis of cultural, geographical, and chronological criteria: theatres in Judaea, those in the Nabataean kingdom, those constructed in the Hellenized cities of the region, and the theatres erected in sites that were directly governed by Rome (Segal 1995:3). He proceeded to discuss the first three categories in his "historical-archaeological introduction," but did not examine the fourth as a separate area. As these categories are not delineated on the basis of consistent criteria, they are awkward, making it difficult to compare the structures within them.

Segal provided a detailed corpus of the available data relating to the theatres, as well as considering their locations, plans, dimensions, construction methods and materials, and decoration. When examining the issue of location within a site, he concluded that the deciding factor in the placement of theatre buildings in the region was topography. This conclusion was based on the fact that the majority of theatres were partially built into hillsides, taking advantage of available slopes, and the fact that most of these theatres were not fully integrated into the street plan (Segal 1995:19). He also divided the theatres into functional categories: urban theatres and ritual theatres, with the ritual buildings being further subdivided into urban ritual and extra-urban ritual theatres. He defines urban theatres as those located within cities, which were intended to provide entertainment for the local populace, while ritual theatres are those associated with either urban or extra-urban sanctuaries. With the exception of the literary and epigraphic references to the celebration of the Maioumas festival, Segal does not provide any further evidence supporting his classifications (Segal 1995:16-19).

Alexandra Retzleff studied the *orchestra* space in her doctoral dissertation entitled *The Orchestra Space in Theaters of the Roman and Byzantine Near East* (2001). The geographical boundaries of her study included the Roman provinces of Syria, Arabia, and Judaea, which were later designated as Coele Syria, Arabia, Phoenice, Augusta Libanensis and Palaestina, thereby encompassing all the theatres studied by both Frézouls and Segal (Retzleff 2001:18-19). Her work also spanned the entire time in which theatres were in use in the region, from the Hellenistic period to the Byzantine period. She examined the potential functions of these theatres, particularly addressing the likelihood of aquatic and arena spectacles being performed there. She concluded that there is no concrete archaeological evidence to support the assumption that theatres in the region were remodelled to serve as basins for aquatic spectacles; neither did the design of the *orchestra* itself support the assertion that they were used for the staging of arena spectacles, such as gladiatorial games (Retzleff 2001:260-261).

1.2 Objectives

My main objective in the current work is to apply a nonverbal communication approach to the urban contexts of theatre buildings that have been preserved in the archaeological record. As excavations have continued at the sites in this region, more data have been revealed, which can aid in this pursuit. The surrounding structures and their spatial interrelationships with theatres have not been examined in detail in previous research on Roman theatre buildings in the Near East. Most studies of Roman theatre buildings in the region have largely focused on their design, with some discussion of function as revealed in the variations and similarities in the plans. Segal does make an attempt to include the issue of location and, to a limited extent, the surrounding

structures when dealing with function in his work. His discussion of these factors is too superficial, however, as he does not describe the specific ways in which the theatres and other structures are associated in space, merely allocating a sentence or two in each subdivision of his corpus to the presence of surrounding buildings. Although he does include a specific section on location in his architectural analysis, his discussion is limited primarily to the use of natural slopes in the construction of theatres and whether or not the theatres are integrated into the street layout. He briefly states that the majority of theatres are not associated with other public buildings, even though there may be other structures in the vicinity of the theatre, but he does not provide detailed evidence to support this assertion. The nonverbal communication approach applied in this thesis provides a solid methodological and theoretical framework in which to study the important interrelationships between the theatres and the surrounding structures and to identify the cues embedded in the built environment.

I also disagree with certain basic assertions Segal makes. His functional classification into urban and ritual theatres is imprecise, as he includes both urban and extra-urban theatres within the ritual category. Segal admits that this classification is problematic, as there are theatres whose location places them in the urban category, but nearby structures suggest the theatres may have served a ritual function. For example, the theatre at Elusa was situated on the outskirts of the city near the necropolis, but its *cavea* faces the city rather than the necropolis. Segal does not provide a detailed discussion of the precise nature of the rituals occurring in the theatres he places in the "ritual" category. His division also implies that theatres were used exclusively for entertainment or religious purposes. I will demonstrate that this was not necessarily the case. For example, the large theatre at Scythopolis is clearly an urban theatre, which

would have been used for standard entertainment purposes, but there are also connections between the theatre and surrounding cult structures.

I disagree with Segal's statement that topography ultimately determined the placement of theatres within sites. He does not take into account the overall topography of the area, such as the presence of other appropriate slopes on which the theatres could have been constructed. He does not examine the effect of the type of activities occurring within the structures on their location, other than in his brief definitions of urban and ritual theatres, as mentioned above in Section 1.1. I will demonstrate that, while topography and available space are certainly factors in the selection of an appropriate site for the construction of such buildings, their positioning within sites was far more complex than previously presented. It is my assertion that the location of theatres in the Near East is not dictated solely by topography, but rather by their intended uses for both entertainment and sacred purposes. I believe that the spatial interrelationships will reveal the ways in which the behaviour of the users was directed and controlled.

A further aim is to explore the various meanings that may be expressed through the nonverbal cues associated with Roman theatres. For example, the cues may be intended to communicate political and social agenda. To this end, I will establish the sender of the messages, as well as the intended receivers, in each case study. I propose that these interpreted messages were designed to influence the behaviour of the receivers, and I believe that, while the actual behaviour is no longer available for study, the effects of the messages on individuals and groups can be determined by a detailed examination of the cues. Ultimately, I hope to contribute to the body of knowledge of Roman theatres in the Near East by revealing the ways in which they communicated nonverbally with the local populace of the cities in which they were located.

I have selected three sites to serve as case studies to be explored in detail: Caesarea, Gerasa, and Scythopolis. Each of the theatres examined dates to a different part of my specified time period, with the theatre at Caesarea from the first century BC, the South Theatre at Gerasa from the late first century AD, and the large theatre at Scythopolis from the late second or early third century AD. The selection of these three theatres will provide a representative sample of the theatres in the region. Roman influence in the Near East was still in its early stages when the theatre at Caesarea was constructed, and so the motives of Herod the Great as its builder were influenced by his position as a client king of Rome. The Roman theatre was a foreign structure being introduced to the region for the first time. The theatres in the Nabataean kingdom were erected shortly after Herod's building projects, and their construction was influenced by some of the same issues, as the relationship of this kingdom to Rome had certain similarities to that of the kingdom of Judaea. In both cases, these kingdoms maintained a certain level of autonomy at the whim of Rome, and as later events demonstrated, those in power in Rome could decide to take direct control in the entire region. Thus, it was prudent for the rulers of these two kingdoms to demonstrate their willingness to incorporate aspects of Roman culture into their own.

The South Theatre at Gerasa was constructed at a time of increasing direct Roman influence in the region, with the creation of the province of Judaea in AD 6 and the province of Arabia in AD 106. There was a growing Roman military presence, as well as increasing Roman control of the governance of the various provinces. Gerasa was one of the cities of the Decapolis with its origins in the Hellenistic period, and there is evidence of Nabataean presence at this site. The large theatre at Scythopolis was built after Roman control of the region had been firmly established for an extended period of

time. Theatres had been erected at many sites, and the various theatrical performances and festivals associated with them were well known. Scythopolis also had Hellenistic origins, which played a role in the function of the theatre. My selection of these three sites, therefore, reflects the changing political climate of the region, as well as the growing familiarity of the populace with the cultural amenities of Romanized life. The extent to which the structures surrounding the theatres have been excavated was also an important factor in this selection. The choice of these specific sites was partly influenced by the availability of published literature.

I will begin by presenting background information on the design, construction, location, and function of Roman theatre buildings, both in general and in the Near East, which will clarify the discussion of these structures throughout the main body of the thesis. This chapter will be followed by a discussion of the nonverbal communication approach and its relevance to the built environment. In order to make this approach applicable to material in the archaeological record, I will adapt the models of Amos Rapoport and Michael Schiffer. I will demonstrate the ways in which architecture communicates nonverbal messages, by means of cues embedded in the basic structural components, the spatial positioning of a given structure within a site, the spatial patterning of buildings within a defined area, and the spatial interrelationships among those structures. These messages are received and interpreted, thereby communicating meanings to the individuals who come into daily contact with the structures. The interpreted messages ultimately influence the behaviour of individuals and groups. I will then devote one chapter each to my three case studies, in which I will describe the nonverbal cues and discuss the intended meanings of the messages and how they influenced behaviour. My conclusions will be presented in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 2

ROMAN THEATRE BUILDINGS

The general plan of a Roman theatre building appears to be based on Greek predecessors, such as the Theatre of Dionysos at Athens and the theatre at Delphi. The Romans were familiar with theatres found in the Greek colonies of Sicily and southern Italy, as well as those located in Greece itself (Brothers 1989:98-99). It is difficult to chart the development of the differences between the Greek and Roman plans, as the first Roman theatres were temporary wooden structures, in compliance with a ban on permanent stone theatres in Rome. This restriction was defied by Pompey in his construction of his theatre complex in the Campus Martius in 55 BC, although he found it necessary to justify his actions by identifying the theatre seats as steps leading to the Temple of Venus Victrix constructed above them (Beacham 1991:56, 161; Favro 1996:58). Pompey seems to have modelled his theatre after the Greek one he had observed at Mitylene. Plutarch records that he "had sketches and plans of it made for him, with the intention of building one like it in Rome, only larger and more magnificent" (Plutarch *Pompey* 42.4). The earliest formal description of a Roman theatre appears in Vitruvius. Writing in the latter half of the first century BC, he described their proper placement and design (Vitruvius *On Archit.* 5.3-8), and by the time theatres began to appear in the Near East, they had an established plan. There is no evidence for Hellenistic theatres in the area covered in this study. The Roman theatre building was, therefore, the type with which most people in the region were familiar.

2.1 Design

There are several basic features that appear in all Roman theatre buildings (Figure 2). The *cavea*, which was the main seating area, was semicircular in shape

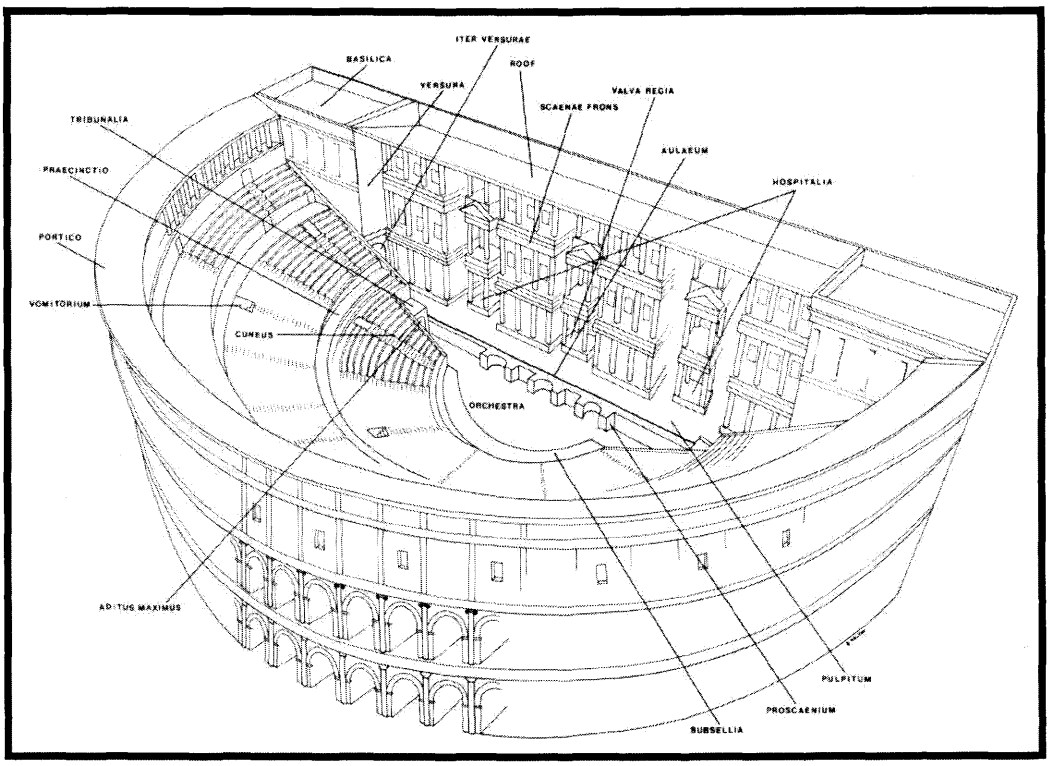

Figure 2: Elevation of a Roman Theatre (Csapo and Slater 1995:Plate 16A).

and could be divided into sections both horizontally and vertically. In most theatres in the Near East the *cavea* was divided into two tiers, with a lower level, or *ima cavea* and an upper level, or *summa cavea*. Smaller theatres, or *odeia*, could have a single horizontal section, as in the theatre at Kanawat (Figure 3), while a so-called *media cavea*, between the lower and upper sections appears in some theatres, such as that of the theatre at Bostra (Figure 4) and the large theatres at Philadelphia (Figure 5) and Petra (Figure 6). The two-tiered division, however, was typical in the region. A *praecinctio*, or walkway separating the horizontal divisions, gave access to the stairs that separated the *cavea* vertically into wedge-shaped sections referred to as *cunei* (singular *cuneus*).

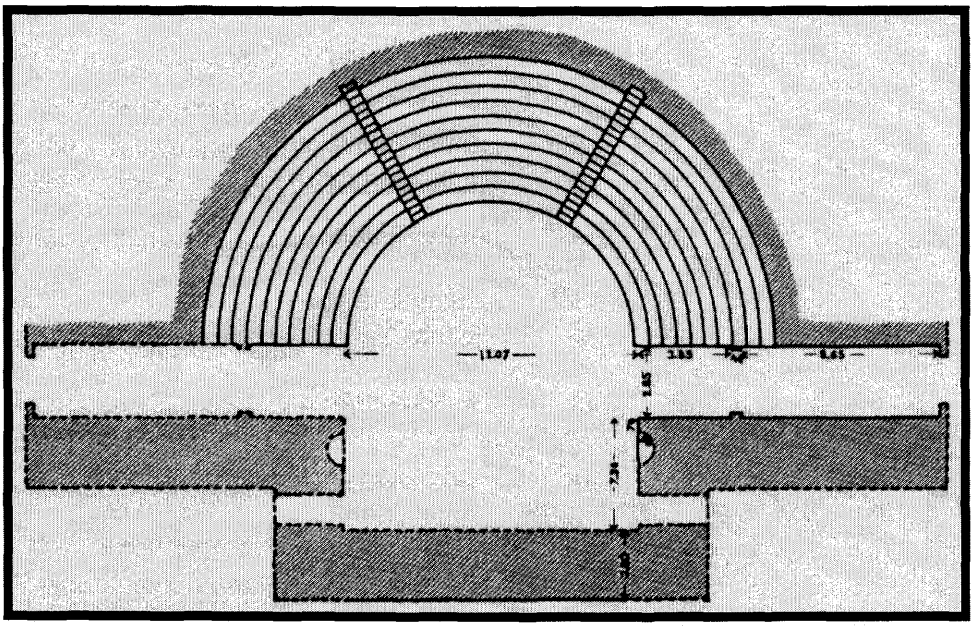

Figure 3: Plan of the Theatre at Kanawat (Segal 1995:Figure 18).

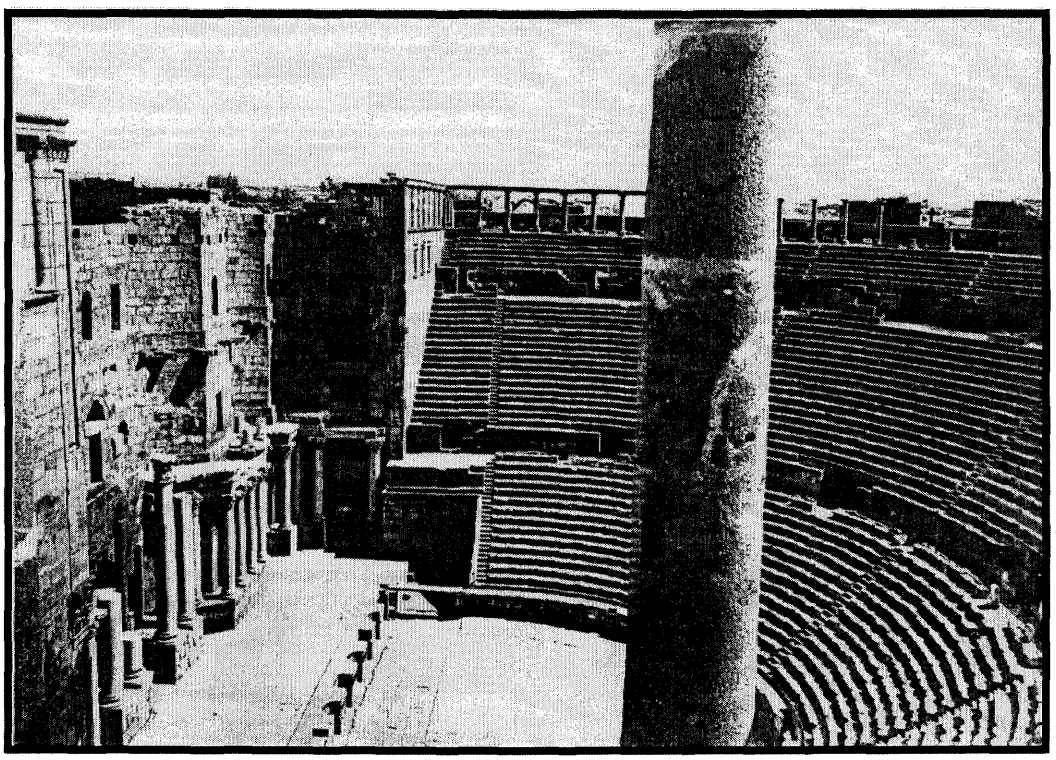

Figure 4: East Side of the Theatre at Bostra (Segal 1995:Figure 48).

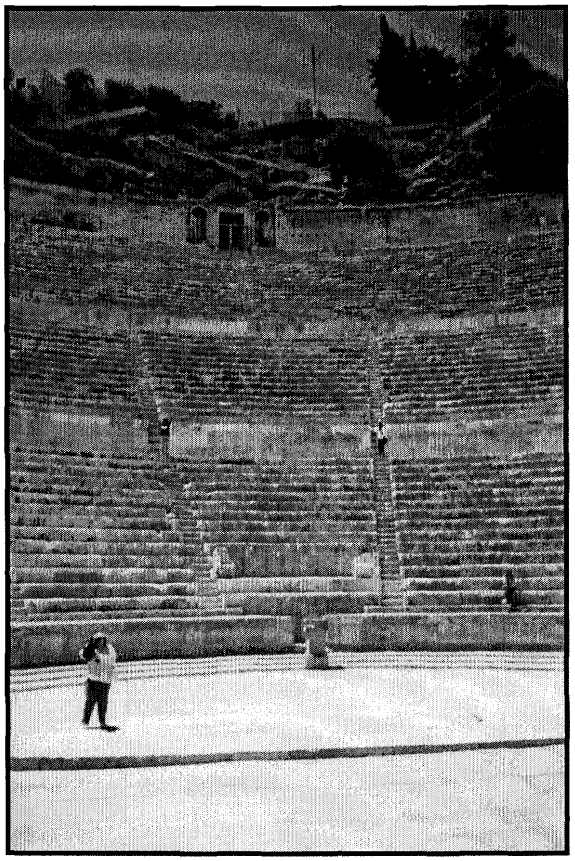

Figure 5: *Ima*, *Media*, and *Summa Cavea* of the Large Theatre at Philadelphia (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

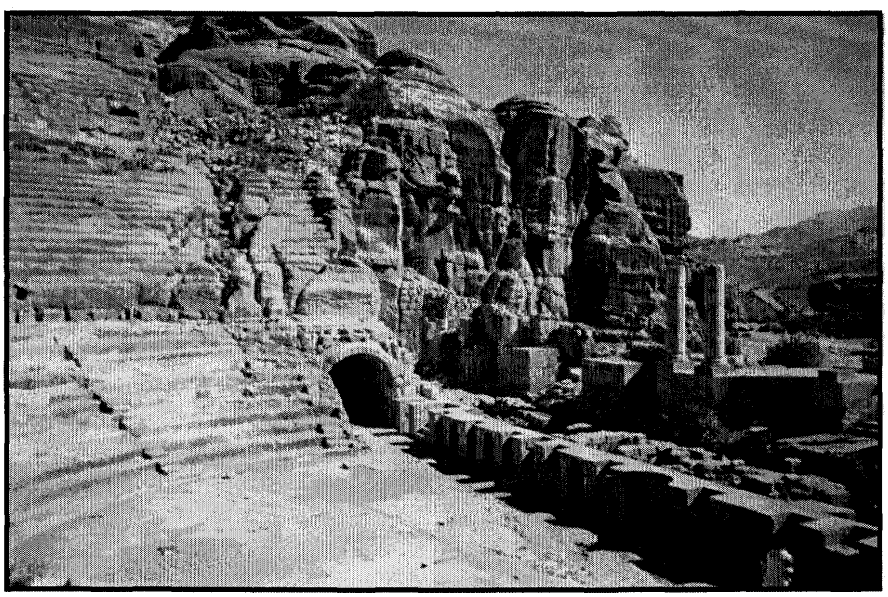

Figure 6: *Ima*, *Media*, and *Summa Cavea* of the Large Theatre at Petra (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

In some theatres, a portico was constructed at the top of the *cavea* to provide a sheltered gathering place for spectators (Figure 4).

There were several entrances built into the theatre. Most Roman theatres in the Near East included an *ambulacrum*, a concentric barrel-vaulted corridor created in the space between the curved rear wall of the *cavea* and an inner curved wall. From this corridor, theatregoers could access the barrel-vaulted passages, called *vomitoria*, which led from the back of the *cavea* into the interior of the building, often opening onto the *praecinctio*. For those entering the theatre at the level of the *orchestra*, the *aditus maximus* on either side provided access into the *orchestra* in front of the *pulpitum* and *proscaenium* (Figure 6). These passageways were often slightly inclined, as the *orchestra* was typically built on a lower level than the surrounding terrain. The *orchestra* was the semicircular space at the foot of the *cavea* before the stage area, and it was typically stone-paved (Figure 7). In a Classical Greek theatre, this space had been

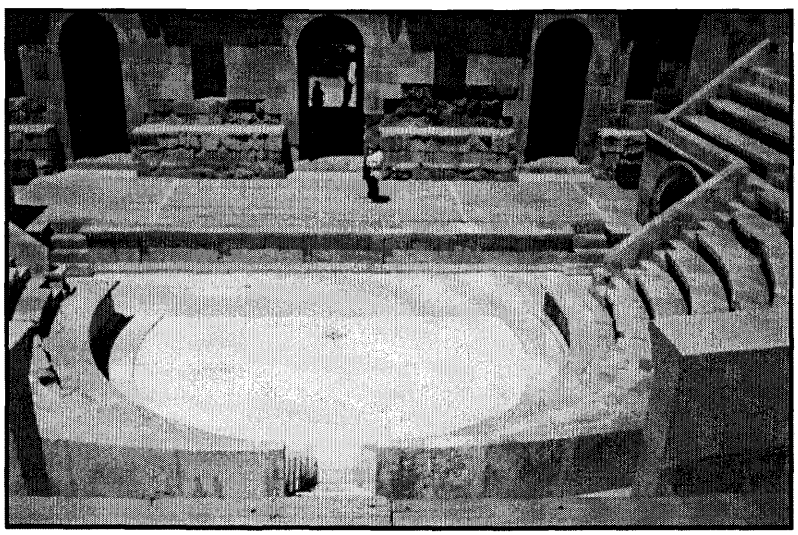

Figure 7: *Orchestra* in the Small Theatre at Philadelphia (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

circular and was used for the performance of the chorus. In the Roman theatre, however, the *orchestra* contained seating for distinguished spectators, and it was

sometimes separated from the main part of the *cavea* by a *podium*. Such honoured guests also could be seated on a *tribunal*, which was a flat area, often located above the *aditus maximus*.

The stage area in a Roman theatre building is where one finds most decorative elements. The *pulpitum* was the flat surface of the stage, usually made of wood, and the arches of the *hyposcaenium* supported it from below. The front wall of the stage was the *proscaenium*, which was constructed of stone and typically stood to a height of approximately 1 metre above the *orchestra* floor (Figure 8). Its façade could be flat

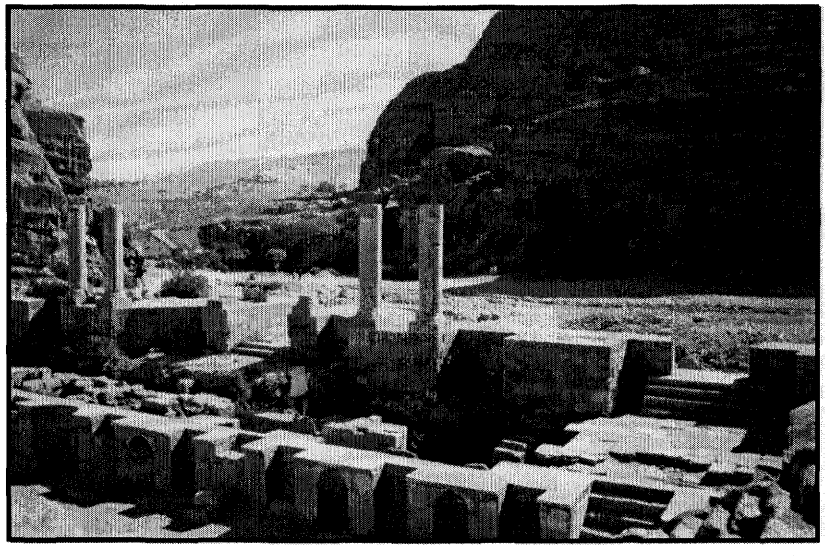

Figure 8: *Proscaenium* of the Large Theatre at Petra in the Lower Left of the Foreground (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

or broken by a series of decorative niches, and occasionally stairs were built into the *proscaenium*, giving access to and from the *orchestra*. Behind the stage area stood the *scaena*, or scene building, which served as a storage area and a place for the actors to change costumes and wait for their entrances onto the *pulpitum*. In the Near East, the *scaena* was usually rectangular, long, and narrow (Figure 9).

The wall of the *scaena* that adjoined the stage provided a splendid architectural

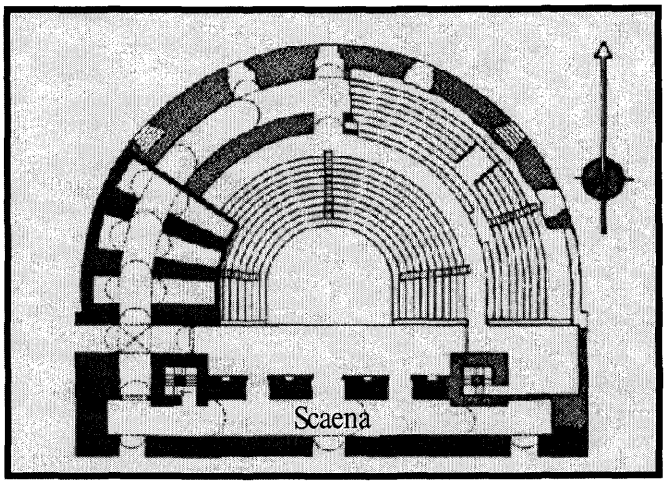

Figure 9: Plan of the Theatre at Philippopolis with a Typical *Scaena* (After Segal 1995:Figure 4).

façade for the spectators seated in the *cavea* to view as a backdrop to the performances taking place on the *pulpitum*. This *scaenae frons* was usually two or three storeys high, reaching the same height as the curved back wall of the *cavea*, and it was elaborately decorated with columns and niches, often containing statuary. Entrance to the stage area from the *scaena* was through the doors in the *scaenae frons*. There were typically three doors. The central one, referred to as the *valva regia*, was usually larger and more ornate than the two flanking doors, or *hospitalia*. Actors could also access the stage from a side door at either end of the *pulpitum*, called a *versura*. [1]

A difficulty in terminology arises when one deals with the space behind the *scaena*. Vitruvius states the importance of the placement of porticoes *post scaenam* (i.e. behind the *scaena*), and these porticoes were designed so the audience would have "a place to gather outside the theater, and the performers have a space in which to rehearse" (Vitruvius *On Archit.* 5.9.1). This public gathering space usually took the form of a

[1] General descriptions of the components of a Roman theatre building can be found in Beacham (1991:56-85, 154-198), Csapo and Slater (1995:84-85), and Sear (1990:73-75). For descriptions specifically oriented towards Roman theatres in the Near East, see Retzleff (2001:1-2) and Segal (1995:21-29).

rectangular plaza, although there could be variations.[2] Examples of such space can be seen behind the *scaena* of the theatre at Leptis Magna (Figure 10) and the Theatre of Pompey in Rome (Figure 11). The term *postscaenium* may be applied to this area, as in

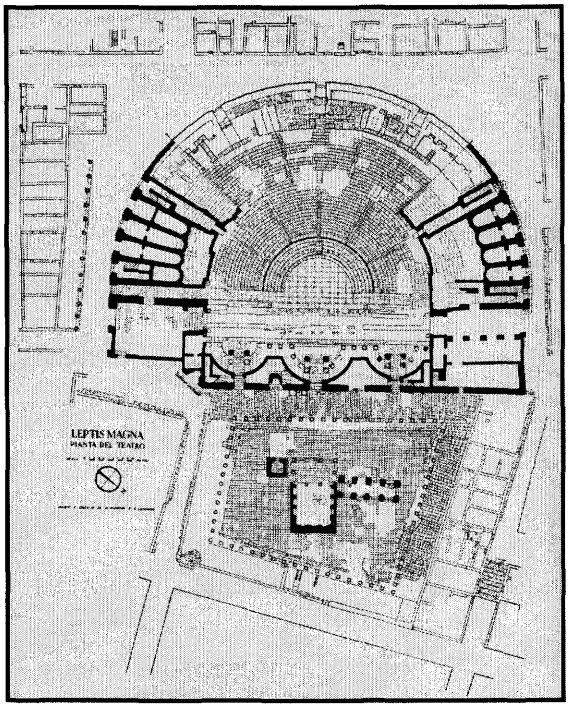

Figure 10: Theatre at Leptis Magna with Gathering Space Behind the *Scaena* (Caputo 1959:*Tav.* 90).

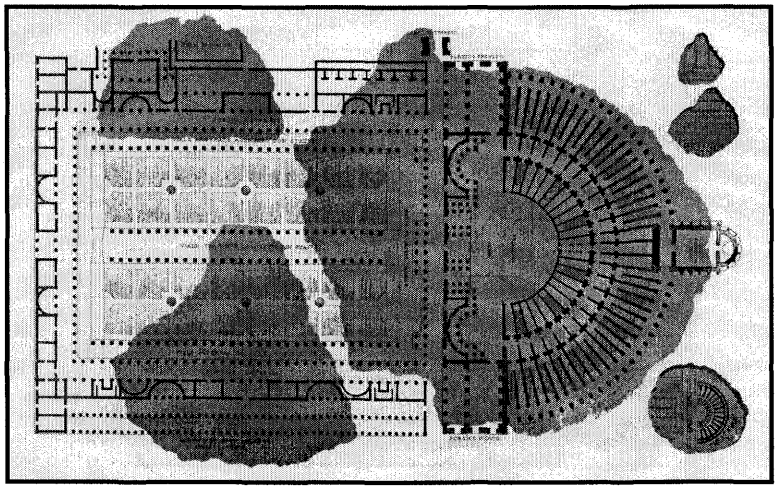

Figure 11: Theatre of Pompey in Rome with Porticoes Behind the *Scaena* (Hanson 1959:Figure 19).

[2] See Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1.

Segal (1995:25), but its use is not always so clear. Retzleff (2001:1) uses *postscaenium* to refer to a corridor running behind the *scaena*, and this seems to be the same structural component to which Sear (1996:220) is referring in the South Theatre at Gerasa. Bieber (1961:xiii) employs the term as a label for the "rooms behind the scene building." In order to avoid the confusion inherent in the use of the term *postscaenium*, I will refer to a porticoed plaza behind the *scaena* simply as formal gathering space, to distinguish it from less formal gathering space in the same location, which may not be strictly defined by means of porticoes.

Theatres were ornately decorated, with engaged and freestanding columns, sometimes carrying an entablature, pilasters, carved reliefs, and decorative niches. In the niches and on pedestals located throughout the theatre were statues of deities and emperors, as well as statues honouring individuals who contributed to the construction of the theatre or the activities undertaken there. For example, an inscription discovered in the South Theatre at Gerasa records the dedication of a statue of Justice by one Diogenes on behalf of his son Eumenes (Welles 1938:399-400).[3] Another inscription, found on a round pedestal in the same theatre, records that the city erected a statue of Titus Flavius Gerrenus, who had served as *agonothetes* of an annual festival held there (Welles 1938:442-444).[4] The decorative components were often constructed of imported stone,[5] contributing to the time and expense involved in the building of a theatre.

[3] Inscription #53 in Welles (1938).
[4] Inscription #192 in Welles (1938).
[5] See Section 2.2.

2.2 Construction

Unlike a Greek theatre, whose *theatron* was always set into the slope of a hill, the *cavea* of a Roman theatre could be constructed in a variety of ways. The development of the arch as a means of supporting the superstructure of the theatre permitted the construction of freestanding theatres, with the entire *cavea* being supported on an artificial substructure. This substructure could be designed as a system of vaults, as in the theatre at Bostra (see Figure 13, p. 22), in which two semicircular, barrel-vaulted, concentric corridors and a series of barrel-vaulted, radial corridors carried the *cavea*. In this case, the substructure was three storeys in height. Theatres could also be supported on an artificial slope constructed of fill held in place by a retaining wall, as in the small theatre at Philadelphia. Throughout the Roman Empire, where a natural slope was available, the builders often made use of it to save time and expense. The large theatre at Petra, for example, was carved entirely out of the sandstone cliff face (Figure 12).

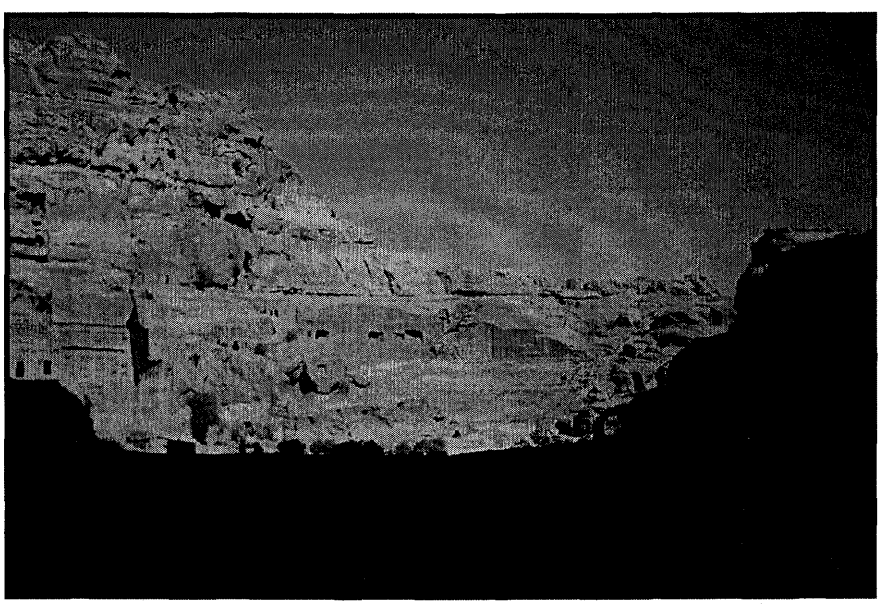

Figure 12: Sandstone Cliff with the Large Theatre to the right of centre at Petra (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

The majority of the theatres in the Near East, however, were constructed using a combination of these two methods. The *ima cavea* was usually set on a small natural slope, while the *media* and *summa cavea* were constructed on an artificial substructure, generally of the type seen in the small theatre at Philadelphia, although the theatres at Caesarea and Scythopolis had artificial substructures like that at Bostra. Examples of this combined method of construction can be seen in the large theatre at Philadelphia and the South Theatre at Gerasa.

Theatres in the Near East were typically constructed using various types of local stone, such as limestone, basalt, and aeolianite. This is in contrast to the theatres of Rome and the western part of the empire, in which *opus caementicium* was used. It was unusual for more than one type of stone to be used in building the main part of the theatre, although the large theatre at Scythopolis is an exception.[6] The decorative components were made of imported stone, such as marble, alabaster, and granite, and the *orchestra* could be marble-paved as well.

2.3 Location

Generally, Roman theatres were found within the city centre, having been integrated into the street network when the city plan was conceived, as can be seen in the placement of the theatre at Scythopolis or the North Theatre at Gerasa (Weiss 1999:25). This location emphasized the public nature of the structures. Occasionally, the theatre was situated on the outskirts of the city, as seen at Bostra (Figure 13) and Caesarea (Segal 1995:19). In both cases, other entertainment structures are located in the

[6] See Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1.

immediate vicinity, and therefore, the theatres may have formed part of entertainment districts. Entertainment buildings, particularly the amphitheatre and hippodrome, were

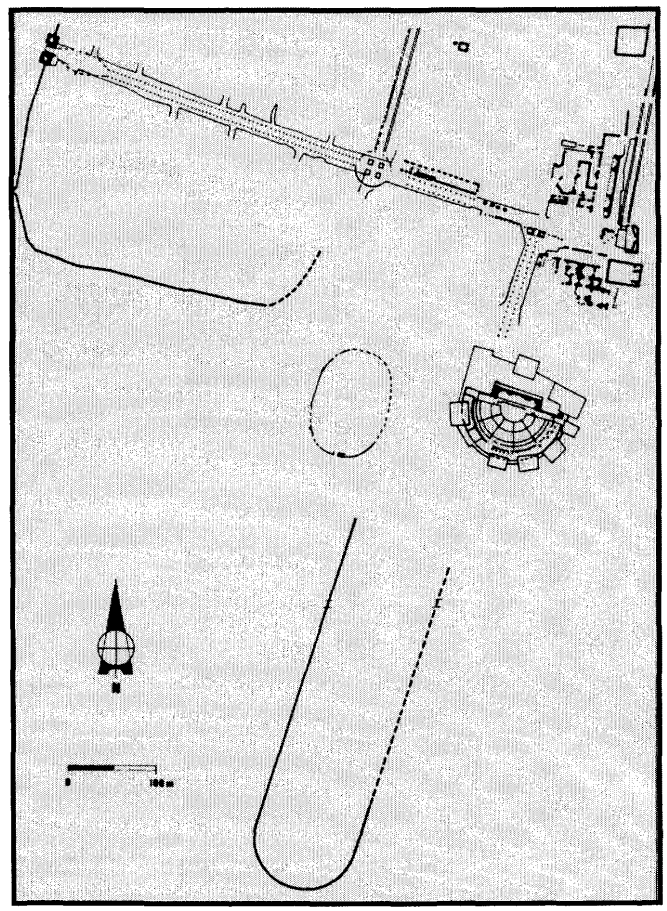

Figure 13: Site Plan of Bostra (Segal 1995:Figure 39).

often erected outside the city. The necessity of adequate flat space for their construction determined this location, although the potentially riotous crowds frequenting them may have influenced their placement as well (Weiss 1999:25). Topography would have played a significant role in the positioning of some theatres, as most did in part make use of natural slopes (Segal 1995:19), but this was not the sole determining factor. This is an issue that will be explored in greater detail in the case studies to follow.

The location of Roman theatres could also be influenced by their incorporation into larger complexes. At Ostia, for example, the theatre is connected to the porticoed

square [mis]labelled the Square of Corporations (Ward-Perkins 1983:144, 284). The Theatre of Pompey (Figure 11) was incorporated into a complex of porticoes, with *viridaria* that enhanced the tranquil atmosphere, and this complex also included a temple and a *curia* (Favro 1996:59). Both the large and small theatres at Philadelphia adjoin the Forum area (Segal 1988:7-8), and the porticoes surrounding the Forum could provide gathering space, as discussed in Section 2.1.

2.4 Function

Theatres in the Roman world could function in a variety of ways. As far back as the Republican period, theatrical performances were included as part of the entertainment presented at Roman games. These games were often religious in nature, and so the connection between sacred activities and the theatre was made in Rome almost from the very inception of the theatre there. Livy (7.2) records that in 363 BC, "among other efforts to disarm the wrath of the gods, the Romans are said to have instituted theatrical entertainment" (Csapo and Slater 1995:210).[7] This association between religious festivals and dramatic performances persisted throughout Republican and Imperial times (Jory 1990:66). In the Greek world, notably at Athens, theatrical performances were part of celebrations to honour Dionysos. Other deities could be honoured as well, such as Apollo at Delphi, and both Apollo and Asklepios at Epidauros. There is also evidence to support connections between the theatre and temples in the Nabataean world (Sperber 1998:168).[8]

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[7] Source #174 in Csapo and Slater (1995:210).
[8] The association of temples and theatres in the Nabataean world will be discussed in chapter 5.

The *ludi solemnes* were regular games included in religious festivals and celebrations, and these could incorporate *ludi scaenici* (dramatic performances), and *ludi circenses* (circus games). Several major *ludi publici* included theatrical productions (Csapo and Slater 1995:208). For example, the Roman Games, also called *Ludi Magni*, were established as a regular event in 366 BC, and *ludi scaenici* seem to have been included from the beginning. Livy (24.43.7) records that "four days were devoted to dramatic performances" in 214 BC (Csapo and Slater 1995:213).[9] In 212 BC, the *Apollinares*, honouring Apollo, were instituted, and they always included dramatic productions.

In Imperial times theatrical performances could also accompany the other spectacles and festivals held to honour individuals and mark important events. These *munera*, or honorary spectacles, were often presented by emperors to celebrate victories or on the occasion of funerals or birthdays (Csapo and Slater 1995:207-208). For example, a dramatic production was included in the celebrations of Octavian's victory at Actium (Beacham 1991:126). The founding of the city of Caesarea was celebrated with festivities that included musical and athletic contests held in the theatre, after which these games became a quinquennial celebration (Josephus *JA* 16.5.1).

It can be difficult to determine what specific activities were occurring in the Roman theatres of the Near East. Comedy and tragedy were still being performed in the Roman world at the time of the construction of theatres in this region, but they had been superseded largely by mime and pantomime (Csapo and Slater 1995:369). What is termed mime was not a silent production. It involved parody of everyday life, with the actors relying on exaggerated, and often crude, facial expressions and gestures.

[9] Source #179 in Csapo and Slater (1995:213).

Pantomime, on the other hand, was essentially a way of telling a story through dance and elaborate hand movements. It was performed by a single, silent individual, who was accompanied by musicians and a chorus or a sole narrator, who sang the story (Beacham 1991:129-142; Csapo and Slater 1995:369-373). There is literary and epigraphic evidence for both mime and pantomime being performed in Roman theatres in the Near East (Weiss 1999:31-33). Musical and athletic contests may have been held in the theatre, and theatrical performances associated with religious festivals were conducted here as well. The Maioumas festival was held in honour of Dionysos and Aphrodite and was celebrated as a "nocturnal dramatic festival" (Retzleff 2001:31). Epigraphic evidence indicates that the theatre at Birketein, which was associated with a large pool, was used for this purpose (Retzleff 2001:217). Smaller theatres, or *odeia*, such as the North Theatre at Gerasa and the small theatre at Scythopolis, very likely functioned primarily as council chambers (*bouleuteria*) for the city administrators. The names of the *phylai*, or "electoral districts" were carved into some of the seats in the North Theatre at Gerasa, which supports this interpretation of its function (Segal 1995:61, 74). The theatre also could serve as a gathering place for the population of a city (Csapo and Slater 1995:85). Important speakers could address the crowd, and the populace could view visiting dignitaries, such as when the emperor Hadrian visited the city of Gerasa in AD 130.

Thus, Roman theatres in the Near East were constructed according to a standard plan, and they were used for a variety of purposes. Several factors may have contributed to their location within a site, including the spatial interrelationships between the theatres and surrounding structures. These factors will be explored in detail in the case

studies to follow, but before examining three Roman theatres in detail, I will establish the theoretical approach and the methodology to be used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

THE NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION APPROACH: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Those studying meaning in architecture in the archaeological record have employed a variety of theoretical approaches in the past, most notably the symbolic approach (Hodder 2000:86-96; Knights 1994: 113-146; Leone 1984: 25-35; Leone and Hurry 1998: 34-62; Renfrew 2001:122-140; Segal 1997). Although these approaches have yielded many studies with valuable results, I believe that further work in this area is warranted. In this thesis, I intend to focus on the role of nonverbal communication in the built environment, particularly in the context of Roman theatre buildings and their surroundings in the Near East. Others have considered various aspects of the urban layout and environment in the Roman Empire (Burns and Eadie 2001; MacDonald 1986; Owens 1991; Roller 1998; Segal 1988; Segal 1997). Roman theatre buildings, both in general (Bieber 1961; Hanson 1959; Sear 1990) and specifically in the Near East (Retzleff 2001; Segal 1995; Weiss 1999), have been examined as well. The nonverbal communication approach, however, has not been applied previously in this latter context, and in fact, little attempt has been made to apply this approach directly to archaeological material in general, although aspects of it have been employed indirectly.

Proponents of this approach state that human behaviour can be moulded and directed, although not determined, by the built environment. As individuals within a culture decode the messages in their built surroundings, they are given indications of

appropriate behaviour. The meanings intended by the builders may not be those interpreted by the users. Archaeology has demonstrated already that certain structures can convey powerful meanings, particularly in a sacred context. I believe this conveyance holds true for many other structures and the spatial interrelationships among those structures in the built environment.

For the purposes of this study, the built environment is defined as the overall urban context consisting of components that have been constructed or modified by human beings. These components include ones that are structural, fixed, semi-portable, and portable.[1] This study of the built environment also includes an examination of spatial positioning, which is defined as the particular location of any given structure within the overall surroundings. The spatial positions of various structures in the urban layout comprise the spatial patterning of the site. Also explored are the spatial interrelationships among structures, identified as the ways in which various structures are related to one another in space. These connections constitute a vital part of this research into meaning in the built environment.

Within archaeological theory, it has come to be accepted that material culture of all sorts has meaning, whether this meaning is intentional or unintentional (Hodder 2000:87-88). In either case, archaeologists can no longer view material culture as having the sole purpose of facilitating adaptive strategies for species survival or as solely utilitarian (Tilley 2000:420). In the following pages, I will present evidence that architecture "communicates," particularly through the structural components and the spatial positioning and interrelationships of structures.

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[1] These components are defined and discussed in detail in Section 3.2.

One of the aims of this thesis is to investigate the ways in which nonverbal messages embedded in the built environment affect the behaviour of individuals and groups. Behavioural archaeologists take the view "that variation in the form and arrangement of artifacts, architecture, and cultural deposits in living systems and in the archaeological record is *most directly* the product of human behaviour (controlling for non-cultural formation processes)" (LaMotta and Schiffer 2001:15; emphasis in original). While I agree with this statement, I also contend that the form and arrangement of the above also directly *influence* human behaviour.

It is important to have a clear definition of behaviour in the context of the study of the built environment. LaMotta and Schiffer state that behaviour is "the interaction of one or more living individuals with elements of the material world . . . As a unit of analysis 'behaviour' includes *both* people and objects" (LaMotta and Schiffer 2001:20; emphasis in original). One could extend the range of object or artefact to include architecture. In the case of monumental architecture, Richards states that meaning becomes clear as one studies "the physical presence of people moving through areas, negotiating boundaries and undertaking particular activities at appropriate places" (Richards 2000:544). It is this interaction between people and their surroundings that constitutes behaviour. The communication of information in the built environment by nonverbal means affects the manner in which one interacts with that environment.

This broadened definition of behaviour, which includes both the people and the objects, is carried over to the definition of communication in the field of behavioural archaeology. Communication is "the transmission of information among people and artifacts within and between activities" (LaMotta and Schiffer 2001:34). In the context of nonverbal communication in the built environment, this is a useful definition, as it

does not limit communication to people, but rather acknowledges the role of artefacts (and, by extension, architecture) in this process. It is my contention that the individual or group encoding a message within the built environment initiates this communication, and the individual or group decoding the message and responding to it completes this process.

It is important to acknowledge the role of human agency and intent when studying architecture and material culture in general. If one does not allow for the effects of agency, it is very difficult to understand the variability in material culture (Johnson 2000:212). Human agents in the past may have been fully aware of the consequences of their actions when constructing or creating an element of material culture imbued with meaning. These agents, be they individuals or groups of individuals, could construct environments deliberately designed to control or influence the activities of people. They had a variety of media at their disposal through which they could communicate messages and meaning (Barrett 2001:141-150). The medium I am investigating is architecture, and it is essential to take into account the intended use of structures and the activities that took place within them (Richards 2000:543).

Many of these issues are incorporated into the discipline of landscape archaeology. While much of the work in this area focuses on the natural landscape, there have been studies dealing with the built environment, as a "cultural" or "urban" landscape (Hood 1996:121). When studying the landscape, archaeologists are attempting to "understand the context for other people's lives in other times . . . , to unravel the landscapes they created, and to explain the meanings embedded in them" (Yamin and Metheny 1996:xiii). Most of these studies take a symbolic approach to meaning in the built environment, particularly to symbolism expressed in garden space,

rather than focusing specifically on nonverbal communication (Kelso and Most 1990; Yamin and Metheny 1996).

The nonverbal communication approach I am advocating in this thesis is based largely on the work of Amos Rapoport in his book *The Meaning of the Built Environment* (1990), and that of Michael Schiffer and Andrea Miller in their book *The Material Life of Human Beings* (1999). Rapoport is dealing with the ways in which the built environment can communicate messages nonverbally through cues embedded in the architectural features of a site. While his book generally is "well-received," it is "awkwardly structured" (Gold 1991:1228). His "important insights into meaning and environment" (Foote 1985:643) are overshadowed at times by disagreements among researchers over the value of alternate approaches to studying communication. His work, however, is recognized as bringing "solid scholarship and insight to environment-behavior studies" (Nasar 1991:383). Rapoport does begin to postulate the need for a new analogy of communication in architecture, which will move away from the language-based model,[2] but he does not develop this idea far enough. His work reveals "the need for a better understanding of the material foundations of human communication, not just of the built environment and nonverbal communication" (Foote 1985:642).

Schiffer and Miller (1990) undertake the development of an approach to communication based on this better understanding of the relationships between people and artefacts. They attempt to fashion an approach that is applicable in any discipline and for the study of any type of communication, with a particular focus on the "incessant interaction with endlessly varied artifacts" (Blaszczyk 2000:793-794), and they are

[2] The language-based model and its inherent problems are discussed in Section 3.3.

successful in doing so. Unfortunately, this book is "enormously complex and highly abstract" and the jargon can be "mind-boggling" (Blaszczyk 2000:794). I find it necessary to alter some of these general terms to orient them towards the discussion of nonverbal communication through architecture. My approach makes use of theoretical and methodological ideas expressed primarily in these two works.

3.1 What is Nonverbal Communication?

Human beings communicate nonverbally with each other in a variety of ways, in addition to verbal and vocal means of discourse. Such nonverbal exchanges are generally thought to elucidate the meanings already being communicated through verbal means (Fletcher 1989:33; Rapoport 1990:49). Schiffer and Miller (1999:32) contend that this is not always the case, as messages communicated nonverbally can stand on their own without any accompanying verbal discourse. The process of nonverbal communication, or indeed, any form of communication, consists of a series of events: inscription of the message by the person or group of people sending it, the emission of the message to the person receiving it, the reception of the message by this receiver, and the receiver's response to the newly acquired information (Schiffer and Miller 1999:68).

Reception and response also involve several stages. Initially, the registration of the message by the receiver takes place, followed by a weighting stage, in which the receiver determines the importance of the message. The receiver then makes inferences about the context in which the message is sent, the person or group of people sending it, and the channel through which it is sent. This is succeeded by a mapping stage, in which all the possible responses in the receiver's repertoire are filtered, leading to the selection of the appropriate or desired response, which is then executed (Schiffer and

Miller 1999:104-115). For the purposes of this study, these stages are simplified to the reception and interpretation of any number of nonverbal cues, which communicate the desired message, and are then acted upon by the receiver. It is important to note that often both the cues themselves and the meanings being conveyed by the cues are culturally specific and variable, which makes them difficult for people outside the particular culture in question to interpret. Some researchers believe that there are also universal elements of nonverbal communication, which can be understood by any member of our species (Rapoport 1990:21, 101-102). These points will be further elucidated in Section 3.3.

The study of nonverbal communication has revealed the existence of multiple channels for conveying meaning, one of which is the built environment. Cues may be projected through channels that target the visual, auditory, olfactory, or tactile senses, or any combination of the above. The built environment typically operates at the visual level, which is the level focused on in the case studies, but it also can affect the individual by controlling the flow of sound. For example, the detection of sound may be hindered or aided by the placement of walls, structures, and open spaces, and this can convey a sense of the private or the public without it being verbally expressed (Fletcher 1995:6-8; Rapoport 1990:49). As Roman theatre buildings are enclosed structures, the sound of the theatrical performances would not be clearly audible from outside the building, which could contribute to a sense of separation between activities occurring within the theatre and those taking place outside it.

The nonverbal communication process is dependant on the presence of several specific elements. These are necessary for the message to be effectively conveyed and acted upon. Behavioural archaeologists make distinctions in this area, separating the

roles of sender, receiver, and emitter (LaMotta and Schiffer 2001:34-35; Schiffer and Miller 1999:60). The sender is the individual or group, who modifies the properties of the emitter in order to transmit information. The emitter, which can be a person, part of the natural environment, or an artefact, is the component that "emits" the message. As established on page 29, architecture can be classified as an artefact, and therefore can function as an emitter. The receiver is the person or group of people, who receive and respond to the message (Schiffer and Miller 1999:70-82). Schiffer and Miller (1999:90-100) indicate that any person, artefact, or element of the natural environment, which possesses the necessary characteristics, can play these three roles. The sender and receiver need not be human. In the context of this study, however, the senders and receivers are always human beings, and the emitter is always the built environment.

The primary focus of the above approach is the receiver and his/her response to the information being communicated. The role of the sender is relegated to the background. In fact, this person may be regarded simply as a receiver in another chain of communication, and the message being sent is part of the receiver's response to the message he/she is receiving in this alternate communication chain (Schiffer and Miller 1999:62,69). While I agree that the receiver is an essential part of the nonverbal communication process, and ultimately, my goals include the examination of the effects of this process on the behaviour of individuals and groups, I do not believe that the role of the sender can be dismissed so easily. Schiffer and Miller (1999:63-64) explain their approach by emphasizing the difficulties in determining the intent of the sender and by stressing that the element of intent is not always present in all instances of communication. A receiver may take notice of a certain set of cues, which transmit information, without the sender being aware of this transmission or intending to relay a

particular message. While a lack of intent on the part of the sender may be true in some cases, I propose to show that intent played an important part in the communication of meaning in the context of Roman theatre buildings and their surroundings in the Near East. Although there are certainly difficulties inherent in determining what these intended meanings were, I believe that the careful consideration of the context, the senders, and the receivers will bring these intentions to the forefront.

Because Schiffer and Miller developed their approach to communication to be generally applicable in any discipline (Schiffer and Miller 1999:x), the division of roles into three categories is too broad for the detailed analysis I am undertaking. In particular, the role of the emitter and the message requires further subdivisions. To this end, Rapoport provides the following list of seven required elements:

(1) a sender (encoder)

(2) a receiver (decoder)

(3) a channel

(4) a message form

(5) a cultural code (the form of encoding)

(6) a topic—the social situation of the sender, intended receiver, place, the intended meaning

(7) the context or scene, which is part of what is being communicated but is partly external to it—in any case a given [Rapoport 1990:52-53].

In this set of elements, the emitter becomes the channel through which the message is being communicated. I believe this more closely parallels my views regarding the intentions of the sender. This individual or group is using the built environment as a means of sending a particular message or messages without

verbalizing it. Thus, in this context, the channel serves the sender. There are problems with Rapoport's terminology, however. The use of the term "topic" is awkward, in view of his definition of it. While the inclusion of the intended meaning in this definition makes sense, the aspects relating to the sender and receiver seem redundant. Surely these aspects can be included in the categories of sender, receiver, and context. The "cultural code" is also somewhat confusing, and seems to be an unnecessary distinction, as this would appear to be part of the message form and the context. It seems appropriate to compress these elements and to clarify the divisions by using terms, which are easily understandable. To this end, I utilize the following seven elements in this work:

(1) the sender (who encodes the message)

(2) the receiver (who decodes the message)

(3) the context (in which the message is sent and received)

(4) the channel (through which the message is sent)

(5) the encoded message (composed of the cues).

Once these first five elements have been established, they allow one to make inferences about the final two elements:

(6) the intended meaning (which is interpreted from the cues)

(7) the effects on behaviour.

The message can be further subdivided on the basis of the types of cues being employed. I will be discussing the structural components and the spatial positioning, patterning, and interrelationships as part of the message.

The reception and interpretation of nonverbal cues allows one to make judgements, which can then influence behaviour. The appropriateness or

inappropriateness of a particular course of action should become apparent to an individual who possesses the necessary cultural cognizance to decode the messages. For example, specific facial expressions exhibited by a person may indicate moods that once interpreted can influence the behaviour of any nearby individuals (Rapoport 1990:97). Schiffer and Miller (1999:54-55) refer to this cognizance as relational knowledge, with inferences about the cues being made on the basis of this knowledge. The "physical modification of elements" in the built environment can affect changes in behaviour as well (LaMotta and Schiffer 2001:32). For example, the construction of a new street in an area of high traffic will ease congestion, as the behaviour of individuals is modified in response to this new development. While some people will continue to use the old street, others will take advantage of the new one. The placement of entrances and exits to public structures also illustrates this point. These doorways provide cues to the receiver, informing him/her of the proper places to access the building. Whether or not one responds appropriately to the given cues is another matter entirely. Even if one correctly interprets an encoded message, the message, in and of itself, is not determining. Individuals may choose wilfully to ignore the intended meaning and proceed with inappropriate action (Rapoport 1990:57-59). On the other hand, the meaning being communicated through material culture may actually prevent an individual from carrying out an intended action (Fletcher 1995:8).

There are two factors which allow nonverbal cues, particularly those found in the built environment, to function with maximum efficiency: contradistinction and redundancy. These factors may seem contradictory, but cues function most effectively when a balance is reached between the two. On one hand, contradistinction, as expressed through nonverbal cues, plays a significant role in ensuring the accurate and

feasible transmission of meaning. It is necessary for the individual cues to be distinctive in their surroundings to enable the receiver to detect them. One finds that "differences become more noticeable, and meanings clearer, when they are unique" (Rapoport 1990:121). Thus, cues expressed by such means as shape, colour, and spatial positioning, which are distinct from other cues within the surroundings, are read with greater ease and so, are more effective. For example, if a building is not in alignment with the street plan and other structures at a site, it is more noticeable, and presumably, the builders and users of the structure would be aware of this distinction.

On the other hand, repetitive cues enable the receiver to decode a message with greater certainty. Some messages may be difficult to decipher if the cues are ambiguous, "but guesses can be good *if the cues add up*" (Rapoport 1990:51; emphasis in original). Redundancy, therefore, becomes essential to the success of such nonverbal communication. For example, if a structure is set apart from other buildings, is constructed with a permanent material, such as stone, as opposed to a more perishable one, such as mud-brick, is more elaborate in decoration, and is taller than any nearby structures, this plethora of nonverbal cues clearly announces that this building is distinct. In the Graeco-Roman world, one may recognize a temple or other structures within a *temenos* on the basis of such indicators.

Having established the existence of nonverbal communication and the use of cues to transmit the encoded messages, one must address the issue of how an individual learns the codes that allow him/her to decode the cues. It seems likely that these codes are learned early in life through enculturation. Simply living within a particular culture, participating in activities, and absorbing and observing the ways in which meanings are transmitted leads to a "natural" understanding and decoding of the cues. Obviously,

individuals who immigrate into a new culture will be at a distinct disadvantage, as has been observed in many studies, both contemporary and historical (Rapoport 1990:65-68, 140). The process of acculturation enables individuals in contact with an unfamiliar culture or those experiencing the advent of swift culture change to become acquainted with the nonverbal cues employed in that societal setting (Rapoport 1990:65).

Schiffer and Miller (1999:54-55, 72-76) do not use the term enculturation when discussing the acquisition of knowledge that allows one to decode messages. While they agree that individuals make inferences about the cues on the basis of relational knowledge, which is obtained by experience, they also state that certain inferences and subsequent responses can be based on biological or genetic components. The cues, intended meanings, and effects on behaviour discussed in the context of this study rely on basic cultural, and experiential, knowledge, rather than biological or genetic factors, and therefore, enculturation is responsible for the ability of an individual to interpret the cues. It is also worth noting that individuals of different gender, class, socio-economic background, or ideological beliefs will approach the nonverbal cues from different perspectives, which will influence their ability to interpret the cues (Hodder 2000:88; Johnson 2000:215). Thus, it is necessary for cues to be comprehensible to a broad spectrum of the population.

The easy interpretation of cues is in direct correlation to the level of respect accorded to longstanding conventions in society (Rapoport 1990:59, 84-85). In a culture in which traditional values and practices are not easily supplanted and tend to be preserved without change, cues are understandable in relation to a common body of knowledge. For example, in a "traditional" society, the placement of a washbasin adjacent to the entrance to a religious building clearly communicates the importance

placed on ritual cleanliness. A "non-traditional" society can be plagued by cues that are indecipherable to the average person, due to the lack of significant shared knowledge. Thus, in the modern Western world, cues have less clarity than in many ancient societies. Consistency in the use of cues and their specific meanings is a hallmark of "traditional" societies (Rapoport 1990:80-85).

One of the central elements necessary for the understanding of nonverbal communication is context (Hodder 2000:89; Rapoport 1990:70-80; Renfrew 2001:124). In this study, context is fundamental. As discussed above, many cues and their intended meanings are culturally specific and are understandable only within that cultural context. For example, nodding one's head up and down may mean "yes" in one culture, but can mean quite the opposite in another culture. Even within a given society, varied physical contexts can aid in the interpretation of cues. Rapoport gives the following example to illustrate this point: "dirty or torn clothing worn while working on a car or in the garden will be evaluated quite differently than would the same clothing worn at a party or in a restaurant" (Rapoport 1990:70). The importance of context raises serious issues for the archaeological use of the nonverbal communication approach, which will be considered in greater detail in Section 3.4.

3.2 How Does Architecture Communicate Nonverbally?

I make several distinctions in the areas of architecture and the built environment that will be employed in this work. These categories are based in part on Rapoport's tripartite separation: fixed-feature elements, semifixed-feature elements, and nonfixed-feature elements (Rapoport 1990:87-96). These divisions are inadequate for my purposes, since they are too vague when applied in an archaeological context, as

archaeologists differentiate between various types of fixed- and semifixed-feature elements. I find it useful to distinguish between structural components, fixtures, semi-portable components, and portable components. Structural components include basic architectural features, such as walls, streets, and buildings. They provide a "long-term, stable context", which does not easily change (Fletcher 1995:3). Fixtures are those features, such as hearths, gardens, and decorative elements (i.e. mosaics, frescoes, and architectural decoration), which are firmly fixed within the structural components. Semi-portable components consist of larger objects, such as items of furniture and statuary, which are technically moveable but for which it may be impractical or undesirable to do so. Portable components are small artefacts that may be moved easily. A further problem arises when considering Rapoport's category of nonfixed-feature elements, because it refers to human actions, but in an archaeological context, one reasonably might assume that this refers to portable artefacts. It is simpler to identify such actions as behaviours, and in this way, separate them from the concrete artefacts and architectural elements being examined. Schiffer and Miller (1999:23-24) distinguish between situational and platial artefacts as well. Situational artefacts are transported to a place with people for the performance of a particular activity. Platial artefacts are those from which "people obtain information on a place's appropriateness for carrying out specific activities" (Schiffer and Miller 1999:24). I will be concentrating primarily on platial artefacts, specifically the structural components, including the buildings as a whole, as well as their spatial positioning, and the spatial interrelationships among the theatres and the surrounding structures.

Rapoport does state that "the ways in which these [fixed-feature] elements are organized (their spatial organization), their size, location, sequence, arrangement, and so

on, do communicate meaning, particularly in traditional cultures" (Rapoport 1990:87). He prefers, however, to focus on nonfixed-feature elements (which include behaviours) and semifixed-feature elements (which include my categories of portable and semi-portable components) because he feels that the lack of frequent change in the fixed-feature realm (i.e. the structural components and fixtures) impedes the ability of these components to communicate effectively on their own. He also believes that spatial interrelationships are too ambiguous on their own to be very effective (Rapoport 1990:89, 111). I disagree with this view, as there are cues embedded in such interrelationships, and regardless of the fixed nature of these cues, their interpretation can have various effects on behaviour, such as the direction and control of traffic between structures. In this work I intend to show the ways in which the structural components and spatial interrelationships associated with Roman theatres in the Near East can communicate much about the ways in which they were used, how they were viewed by the builders and users of these structures, and how the behaviour of individuals and groups was affected.

The process of nonverbal communication through architecture begins with the inscription or encoding of a message, in the form of cues, in the built environment by a sender or senders. The senders are those responsible for the construction, design, and placement of a given building. Cues are present, such as positioning, size, location, colour, overall design, decoration, and maintenance, which can carry meanings to be decoded by the users (Rapoport 1990:84, 139, 181). It is important that these cues be noticeable and that their meanings be discernable. For example, the size and decorative components associated with the main entrance to a structure often distinguish it from secondary or private entrances. This is exemplified by the large doors covered by a

protective awning, which extends over the sidewalk in front of many of the larger, more expensive hotels in the modern Western world. Not only do these cues indicate which entrance is intended for the public, thereby preventing them from using a service entrance, but the protection from the elements provided by the awning communicates the desire of the hotel staff to ensure the comfort of its guests. Size, design, location, and building materials also provide cues in the context of staircases. A visitor easily interprets wide concrete steps approaching the front of an apartment block as the main stairs leading to the building. The cues furnish the receiver with adequate information to make this identification, and so he or she does not attempt to access the building by means of the narrow metal fire escape extending up the side of the apartment block. Once the cues are received, they can influence the behaviour of individuals, and in some cases, people rely on the cues to guide their actions and ensure appropriate conduct (Barrett 2001:152; Michelson 2000:144). In the above example of the hotel, a degree of uncertainty would result if all the entrances to the structure were identical, and a guest may find himself or herself in the embarrassing position of entering the kitchen or staff quarters, rather than the lobby.

Such cues can be observed in the archaeological record as well. At the site of Gerasa in modern Jordan, worshippers approached the large Temple of Artemis by passing through a series of monumental *Propylaea* along a "Processional Way," which began in the residential quarter of the city, some 500 metres from the temple itself (Segal 1988:27-28). Not only did this Processional Way direct traffic to the temple precinct, but the monumental entrances were designed to impress and inspire an appropriate level of awe when an individual entered the sacred area. The general use of a structure can be indicated by the nonverbal cues present as well. The remains of a

building, dating to the Iron Age period, were uncovered west of Jericho at Hurvat Shilhah in modern Israel. It measured 30 metres by 30 metres, and consisted of a large courtyard with rooms located on two sides. The spatial positioning of this building is significant, as it is isolated and located along a road. These cues strongly suggest that this building might have served as a stopping point for caravans passing along this route, as the pack animals would be able to enter the large courtyard space, and the rooms would provide accommodations for the people associated with the caravans (Mazar 1992:452).

The spatial positioning of structural components can transmit messages clearly through nonverbal means. For example, the placement of a city on a hill, complete with walls and gates, contributes to the message that this city is defensible. Within a city, the positioning of a solitary structure on a hill indicates its importance, and this is often a characteristic of temples. Fletcher agrees with this view in his definition of nonverbal communication: "material behaviour such as the spatial arrangement of inert entities in a settlement" (Fletcher 1989:33). The spatial interrelationships among structures communicate messages and meanings as well. For example, the association of the tombs of courtiers with the pyramids at Giza (Quirke and Spencer 1996:36) might indicate that these individuals believed their chances of a happy, successful afterlife were increased by their proximity in death to the Pharaoh, who was viewed as a god.

Architecture clearly fits within the bounds of nonverbal communication as established in the previous section. People actually "expect the environment to communicate meaning and rules" (Rapoport 2000:125). Among other things, material elements can control the movement, level of contact, and communication occurring between individuals at a site. For example, at the site of Harappa, Pakistan, in the

second millennium BC, the arrangement of the dwellings in the workmen's village affected the behaviour of individuals there. The dwellings were built close to one another in a restricted space, which would have made privacy minimal. This lack of privacy was overcome by constructing the entrances to each dwelling at an angle preventing passers-by from looking directly into the interior (Fletcher 1995:3). This architectural cue would have been received by these passers-by, clearly communicating the private nature of these structures. This message would have influenced their behaviour, as they likely would not enter a dwelling without the permission of its occupant, thereby controlling the level of contact among the workers in otherwise crowded living conditions. Similarly, in the Orkneys, the positioning of the doorways in the Late Neolithic houses at Skara Brae and the paved paths approaching the dwellings are designed to direct people entering the structure to the right side of the room. These features are used to communicate appropriate behaviour through nonverbal means (Parker Pearson and Richards 1994a:42). One must accept the role of human agency in planning structures in such a way as to achieve the desired result, as in the examples above (Barrett 2001:141).

3.3 What is the Nonverbal Communication Approach?

Most approaches to nonverbal communication are founded in a language-based model. Cues are seen as symbolic reflections of verbal messages. Schiffer and Miller (1999:30-31) challenge this view. A language-based model of communication tends to privilege verbal discourse, and fails to account adequately for the abundant interactions between people and artefacts, which result in the transmission of information. Nonverbal communication can function as a separate entity without reference to specific

language correlations. The meanings invested in the built environment, for example, may not be directly translatable to specific verbal messages, but rather may operate by giving impressions to viewers. One cannot entirely eliminate language from the nonverbal communication process, however, particularly if one intends to discuss inferences made from these impressions and the responses formulated by individuals. In most cases, responsive behaviour is governed by an individual's conscious thought process, and these thoughts require language to be articulated. The use of nonverbal cues seems to be a universal feature of human beings, but the particular cues used and their meanings may be culturally variable. In the study of architecture, especially the structural components, there is certainly evidence for cultural variability, but there appear to be universal features as well, such as the use of height to indicate importance. A height difference between structures may advertise the importance and use of a given structure, but this structure could be higher or lower than those surrounding it depending on the particular culture in question (Rapoport 1990:106-107).

The methodology that will be employed here is based on the practices of observation and interpretation. This is a fairly simple methodology and one that is easy to apply in a wide variety of contexts. When participating in ethnographic studies, one can observe the actual behaviours of individuals and make inferences from these actions.[3] When this practice of observation is taken to the level of portable and semi-portable components, fixtures, and structural components, one can ask similar questions of the data: "What is being communicated? Why and by what means? What role do the cues play in behaviour, social interaction, and so on?" (Rapoport 1990:96-97). In fact,

[3] It obviously is not possible to observe the actual behaviours of individuals in the archaeological record, but the effects of the behaviours should be discernable. This is discussed in Section 3.4.

the study of fixtures and structural components is facilitated by the stationary nature of the data. While behaviour can pass quickly, the settings in which it occurred are often lasting, and consequently, easier to study (Fletcher 1995:3; Rapoport 1990:100).

This methodology is straightforward and has been utilized in numerous contemporary and historical studies. For example, J. Hazard conducted a study of the spatial arrangement of the fixtures and semi-portable artefacts in courtrooms. By observing the interrelationships among the seats of the judge, jury, defendant, and attorneys, he was able to identify the essential characteristics of the judicial systems in different countries (Rapoport 1990:124-126). Jon Goss conducted a study of shopping malls in North America, which involved observation of these structures, revealing the ways in which malls are designed to influence the shopping habits of consumers (Goss 1993:18-47). The researcher observes the material in question, searching out the cues and becoming more familiar at the same time with the culture and the particular features studied. This process ultimately leads to an interpretation of the cues and decoding of the messages held therein. There is clearly an element of intuition involved in this process, which is made possible by the researcher's submersion in the data and accompanying cultural context (Rapoport 1990:123-124). Because of the culturally specific nature of cues and their intended meanings, the researcher must examine other aspects of the given culture to aid in this overall process.

When applying this methodology to archaeological remains, there are potential problems. Not only is the archaeological record incomplete, but also the archaeologists are removed from the cues they are observing by both distance and time. This point has been raised in the contexts of landscape archaeology and phenomenology. Thomas (2001:180-181) proposes an approach to the understanding of meaning in past

landscapes that is applicable to the observation and interpretation of nonverbal cues in past built environments. This approach "advocates an encounter between the archaeologist and the places and monuments that they study" (Thomas 2001:180). Whether this is an actual physical encounter or an imagined one, the point is that the archaeologists are "entering into the same set of material relationships in which people found themselves in the past, in order to produce our own interpretation" (Thomas 2001:180). These interpretations then serve as allegories for the past meanings embedded in the landscape or built environment being studied. Archaeologists must acknowledge that their own experiences in such encounters with the past undoubtedly remain coloured by their modern culture, but only continued study can reveal how the experiences of past individuals differed from those of the archaeologists.

It is possible to distinguish between several separate levels of meaning in the application of the nonverbal communication approach, and this distinction provides links to other theoretical approaches to meaning in the built environment. Rapoport proposes a tripartite division: high-level, middle-level, and low-level meanings. High-level meanings are often understood by only a few individuals, even in their original context, and are based in cosmological, philosophical, or sacred views. This level is sometimes difficult to approach from a nonverbal communication angle, as the average user of the environment so imbued will be unaware of the presence of this meaning, and it is not intended, therefore, to influence behaviour. A symbolic approach may be more suitable (Rapoport 1990:220-222).

The other two levels of meaning are more applicable in the nonverbal communication approach advocated in this study. Middle-level meanings are intended to inform people of such aspects as wealth, status, and power, while low-level meanings

are communicated by "mnemonic cues for identifying uses for which settings are intended and hence the social situations, expected behaviour, and the like" (Rapoport 1990:221-222). These middle-level and low-level meanings can be communicated by architecture quite effectively.

3.4 How is the Nonverbal Communication Approach Applied to Architecture in the Archaeological Record?

The discussion above indicates that the built environment can convey meaning. There have been numerous studies touching on this, but very little work has been done from an archaeological perspective that focuses on nonverbal communication. Much of the work centres on the symbolic, revealing the ways in which ideology appears in the built environment (Hodder 2000:86-96; Knights 1994:113-146; Leone 1984:25-35; Leone and Hurry 1998:34-62; Renfrew 2001:122-140). The unit of study is most often a single domestic dwelling or even a single room and frequently focuses on portable and semi-portable components and fixtures, rather than the spatial interrelationships among structures (Barrett 1994:87-97; Johnson 2000:211-227; Knights 1994:113-146; Nevett 1994:98-112). Roland Fletcher has done some work on nonverbal communication, although he takes a somewhat different view of the meaning of nonverbal communication and how one can study it in the archaeological record. He focuses on the physical distances between buildings in a site, and what deep, underlying structures within the society may be determining these distances. He treats the material culture as behaviour itself and concentrates on how it influences, aids, and constrains interaction between individuals. The long-term "behaviour" of buildings is the central point of his

work, rather than the social factors and meanings that contributed to their initial construction (Fletcher 1989:33-40; Fletcher 1995).

This study will reveal a new way in which to view architecture in the archaeological record, particularly when one examines the spatial interrelationships among structures and the overall spatial positioning and patterning of buildings. Rapoport's work focuses mainly on semifixed-feature and nonfixed-feature elements (i.e. portable and semi-portable components and behaviour), with less emphasis on the structural components and spatial interrelationships that I will be examining. Portable and semi-portable components usually change in correlation to shifts in their use, while structural components, which have a degree of permanence, often do not change (Rapoport 1990:100). Such permanence does facilitate the investigation of the original intended uses of structures.

The simple methodological approach of observation and interpretation is easily adaptable to architecture in the archaeological record, as this is essentially what archaeologists do. We observe material culture and draw conclusions based on the data we have collected. It is only a small step further to begin looking for and decoding messages embedded in the architecture and spatial positioning, patterning, and interrelationships of structures in the archaeological record. As mentioned in Section 3.1, contradistinction and redundancy are important to the nonverbal communication process, and both are detectable for archaeologists. Structures, or at least their foundations, are among the most frequently discovered and excavated features at any Classical or Near Eastern archaeological site, providing archaeologists with the opportunity to observe and interpret cues present in the built environment in many different cultural, temporal, and spatial contexts.

One cannot pretend that there are no inherent difficulties when applying the nonverbal communication approach to archaeological material. Obviously, it is impossible to observe the behaviour of individuals or groups in the archaeological record directly, although we can observe the effects of this behaviour on the material world. Thus, the scope of study is limited to action that can be deduced from the structural, portable, and semi-portable components and fixtures. Ultimately, one is attempting to arrive at conclusions about behaviour without being able to observe it directly. It has been established, however, that these various components can reveal much information, and so this difficulty is outweighed by the apparent benefits.

Current archaeological theory also advocates the necessity of understanding cultural context in the study of any aspect of the past, including architecture (Hodder 2000:89; Renfrew 2001:124). Archaeologists must acknowledge that past cultures differed from their own, and therefore, any meanings inherent in material culture are accessible only by attempting to place them in their original context. Ideally, archaeologists try to see the ancient world as its inhabitants did by attempting to think as the ancient people did (Hodder 2000:90-91; Richards 2000:543-544). Some archaeologists have criticized these attempts, but even if we do not try to think as "they" did, we must at least acknowledge that "they" thought, and it may be possible to recognize the outcomes of "their" thoughts in the archaeological record (Barrett 2001:141-142).

The issue of culturally specific cues and meanings, therefore, can create difficulties for archaeological interpretation. Archaeologists in the twenty-first century approach the data from their own perspectives, while the culture being studied may bear little, if any, resemblance to their own. The experiences and information upon which the

archaeologists can draw to aid in reaching conclusions may be irrelevant or even misleading. This is not a difficulty unique to the application of the nonverbal communication approach. Archaeologists have debated this issue for a long time, and ultimately, one must forge ahead despite this difficulty (Hodder 2000:89-93; Johnsen and Olsen 2000:111,117; Parker Pearson and Richards 1994b:5). In contemporary studies of nonverbal communication, Rapoport has noted that "knowing the cultural context is extremely useful, but even that can be suggested by observation" (Rapoport 1990:123). Clearly, it is to archaeologists' advantage to study nonverbal communication in a culture about which a great deal of information has been uncovered. In the case of the Roman Empire, there are extensive material remains, as well as documentary evidence, to aid the archaeologists.

There are other factors that need to be taken into consideration when dealing with the Roman period in the Near East. The population in the region at this time consisted of a mixture of Greek, Roman, and indigenous peoples, both pagan and Jewish. Rapoport notes that, in contemporary studies, immigrants tend to recreate elements of their original home environments when they arrive in a new land, as this fosters a sense of familiarity (Rapoport 1990:140), and this seems to occur in the Roman Near East as well. Graeco-Roman society was very "traditional", and so their own cultural values and practices were carried with Roman and earlier Hellenistic settlers when they took up residence in parts of the Near East. Thus, elements of Graeco-Roman culture including entertainment buildings, temples, and city plans were transplanted into this region. The indigenous populations in the Near East were also members of "traditional" societies, and therefore, one can expect to see elements of these cultural groups appearing alongside the Graeco-Roman material. The ways in which the

diversity of the population affected the messages, intended meanings, and behaviour in the context of Roman theatre buildings will be discussed in each of the case studies to follow.

The role of human agency and intent in the planning, placement, and construction of structures in a Romanized city are clear. Most Roman towns were constructed following a specific plan, and often those which were in existence already upon the advent of the Romans were altered at least in part to follow a more Roman layout (Schwartz 1998:150). There is clear evidence that the Roman architects and city planners operated within an established set of guidelines as recorded by Vitruvius in his *Ten Books on Architecture*. Certain structures were to be placed in specified locations in relation to certain streets, districts, or even other buildings (Vitruvius *On Archit.* 1.7.1-2).

Turning to the Roman theatre buildings themselves, I will outline the ways in which these structures may communicate nonverbally, as well as outlining the specific methodology I will be using. The design and style of these structures can communicate information about the way they were used and how the people in daily contact with these buildings perceived them. Theatres were clearly designed for large gatherings of people with a focus on the stage area where various activities would take place. Being constructed of stone, they projected a sense of permanence in contrast to the residential buildings of mud-brick. This reflects the time and expense invested in their construction and also indicates a level of importance within the community. My focus will also include the spatial positioning of these theatres and the spatial interrelationships between the theatres and the structures that surround them and how and what these factors communicate nonverbally.

In order to decipher the meaning contained within the spatial positioning of theatres and their interrelationships with their surroundings, I will examine several aspects of the environment in detail. Where are the theatres located in relation to the rest of the structures in the city (i.e. are they on the outskirts of the city or more centrally located?)? How do they fit into the overall street plan? What role does topography play in the choosing of a site on which to construct a theatre? What other buildings are in their immediate vicinity, with which they may be associated either in use or in the minds of the builders and users of the structures? These questions are related to the choices made by the senders regarding the location of the theatres, and these choices may be imbued with meanings. These are all issues that will be discussed in the following case studies dealing with specific sites.

In each case study, I will proceed through several methodological steps. Following an examination of site plans, photographs, structure plans, and site reports, I will identify the potential senders and receivers, as well as detailing the pertinent cultural, temporal, and spatial contexts. I will indicate the particular area of the built environment of each site, which is functioning as the channel. Proceeding from this, I will identify the nonverbal message, composed of the cues present in the structural components and spatial positioning of the theatre, the spatial patterning of structures around it, and the spatial interrelationships between the theatre and these buildings. The conditions of contradistinction and redundancy will also be addressed in each case. After observing the cues, I will examine the possible meanings embedded in the built environment by the senders and how these messages and meanings affected the behaviour of individuals and groups within the given context.

CHAPTER 4

CAESAREA MARITIMA

The theatre at the site of Caesarea Maritima, located on the coastal plain of the modern state of Israel (Figure 1), is the first of three such structures that will be examined in detail. The Missione Archaeologica Italiana excavated the theatre during the period of 1959 to 1963. The team was led by Antonio Frova, and he published the results of the excavation in detail (Frova 1966). In recent years, the southwest area of the site has been excavated by the Israel Antiquities Authority under Yosef Porath, along with the Combined Caesarea Expeditions, and during the summer months, with a collaborative team from the University of Pennsylvania (Porath 1996:105). These excavations have revealed several structures in this area, including a multipurpose entertainment building. As a result of the extensive work in the southwest area, Caesarea presents an ideal built environment for the examination of nonverbal communication as expressed in the theatre and its interrelationships with the surrounding structures.

As outlined in Chapter 3, there are several necessary elements involved in the nonverbal communication process, and I make seven distinctions in this thesis. All of these necessary elements can be detected at Caesarea. The sender, in this case, is Herod the Great, who was responsible for the construction of the theatre and the surrounding structures as part of his monumental building program. The receivers are the members of the populace in Caesarea, who were a diverse group consisting of pagan individuals

(either Roman or indigenous), Jews, and in later times, Christians. The channel is the built environment, specifically the theatre and nearby buildings, while the message consists of several cues that will be discussed in detail below, as will the intended meanings, and how these affected behaviour.[1] Lastly, the context in this case is the first century BC in the Near East, at a time when Herod ruled over Judaea, which was designated as a "client kingdom" by Rome.

4.1 The Sender, Receivers, and Context

It is possible in the case of the theatre area at Caesarea to identify the sender as Herod the Great, to draw various inferences about the receivers, and to reconstruct the context of the time with certainty because of the literary evidence of the first century AD Jewish historian Josephus Flavius. Herod was the king of Judaea, having been endowed with this position on his first visit to Rome in 40 BC. During this visit, he stayed with Mark Antony and also associated with Octavian and Marcus Agrippa (Josephus *JW* 1.14.2-4; *JA* 14.14.2-5). He had the opportunity to observe the progressive building projects in Rome, and this influenced aspects of the plan and construction of structures in Caesarea.[2] The contacts he made while in Rome on this first visit had a continuous influence and presence in Herod's life. He had long been a supporter of Antony, and therefore of Cleopatra, in the region, but following their defeat at Actium, Herod took the bold step of going to meet with Octavian in person on Rhodes to swear his loyalty to the victor. This move was looked upon favourably, as Octavian reaffirmed Herod's

[1] See Sections 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5.
[2] See Section 4.3.4.

kingship and even awarded him new territory, which included the site of Strato's Tower, the future site of Caesarea (Josephus *JW* 1.20.3; *JA* 15.7.3).

Herod embarked on an ambitious building program in the region, particularly between 29 and 9 BC, and during that period, he visited Rome for a second time in 18/17 BC, enabling him to see the progress made on the building projects there (Roller 1998:3). He began building Caesarea in 22 BC, and construction continued for several years. Josephus mentions the theatre, amphitheatre, and palace as being constructed by Herod (Josephus *JW* 1.21.8; *JA* 15.9.6). The city was inaugurated in 10/9 BC, and a great celebration ensued, for which Herod "had announced a contest in music and athletic exercises, and had prepared a great number of gladiators and wild beasts and also horse races and the very lavish shows that are to be seen at Rome and in various other places" (Josephus *JA* 16.5.1). Both Augustus and his wife supported these games monetarily, and Herod established these entertainment activities as a quinquennial celebration (Josephus *JA* 16.5.1).

The population of Caesarea seems to have consisted of a mixture of Roman citizens and soldiers and local people, both pagans and Jews, and in later times, Christians. This created a diverse cultural environment, which could have influenced certain aspects of Herod's building program at the site.[3] Herod reigned in a state of relative peace until his death in 4 BC, and after his successor, Archelaos, was deposed in AD 6, the Roman province of Judaea was created, with Caesarea acting as the political and economic capital (Roller 1998:4).

[3] See Section 4.4.

4.2 The Channel

The built environment of Caesarea functioned as a channel for nonverbal communication. The southwest area of the site is important particularly in the context of this study, as the Roman theatre is located here (Figure 14). In the immediate vicinity of

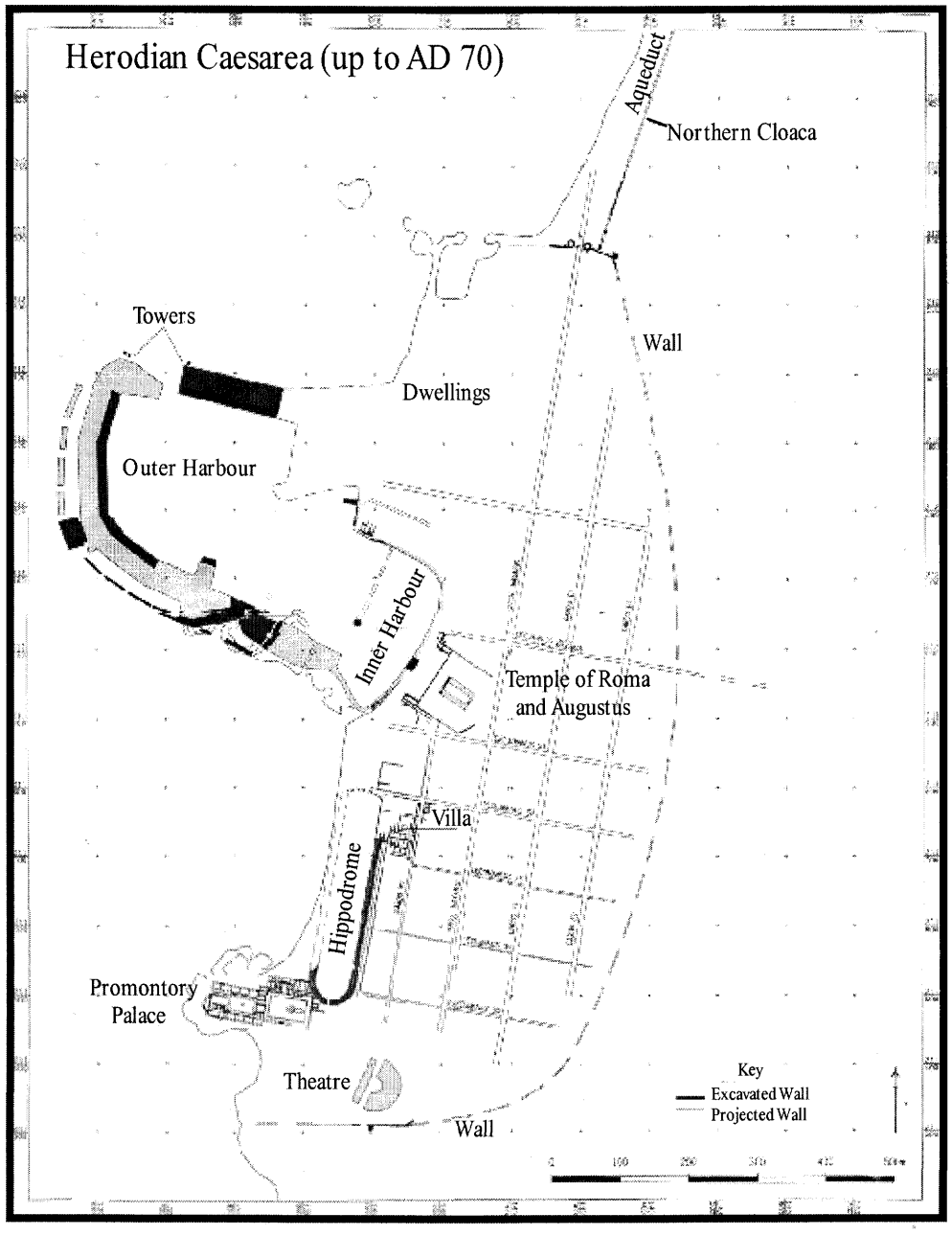

Figure 14: Site Plan of Caesarea Maritima (After Raban and Holum 1996:Map 2).

the theatre are two other structures of interest. Herod's Promontory Palace is located northwest of the theatre on two levels of a promontory that extends towards the sea. Immediately to the east of the palace, running at right angles to it, are the remains of a multipurpose entertainment building, hereafter referred to as the hippodrome. Both of these structures will be discussed in detail in Section 4.3.3.

4.3 The Message (i.e. the Cues)

There are many cues present in the built environment at Caesarea. Various structural components of the theatre were intended to influence the manner in which the populace viewed the building, and they were also intended to influence behaviour. The spatial positioning of the theatre within the site, the spatial patterning of structures in the southwest area, and the spatial interrelationships among these buildings also reveal the intended meanings being communicated here. It will become apparent that the two factors of contradistinction and redundancy are present also. The cues will be described in this section, with their intended meanings in Section 4.4.

4.3.1 Structural Components

The theatre is situated 650 metres south of the harbour and 75 metres inland from the sea, and was constructed of aeolianite, a local stone. The *cavea* has a diameter of approximately 62 metres (Figure 15). It was constructed in the typical fashion for the region, with the *ima cavea* built on a small, natural incline and the *summa cavea* supported by a built substructure on an artificially constructed slope. A *praecinctio* separates the two parts of the *cavea*, and there are six pairs of *vomitoria* extending beneath the *summa cavea*, which allowed spectators to enter the structure at the level of

the *praecinctio* and then proceed up to the *summa cavea* or down to the *ima cavea*. The theatre has a semicircular *orchestra* and *cavea*, and with at least thirty rows of seats, it had a seating capacity of up to 4000 individuals. There is a rectangular, stone-paved

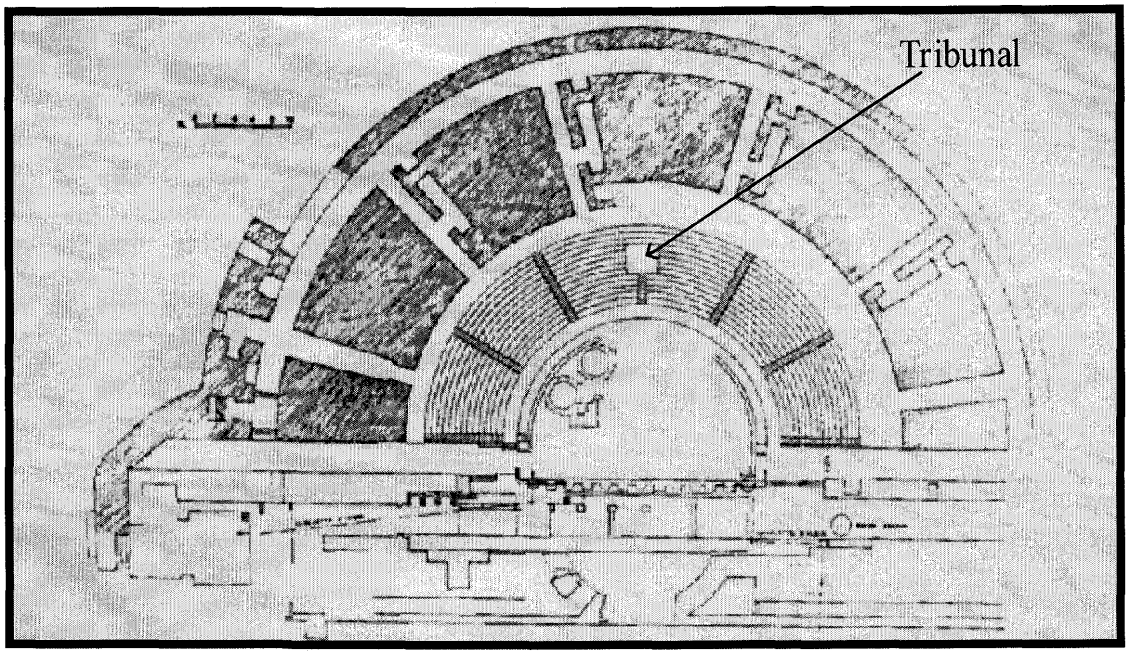

Figure 15: Theatre at Caesarea (After Segal 1995:Figure 70).

space measuring 2.00 by 3.40 metres, which faces the centre of the stage, and this likely functioned as a *tribunal* for distinguished spectators (Segal 1995:64-66). A *podium*, with a height of 1.00 metre, separates the *ima cavea* and the *orchestra*, which had a diameter of 30.00 metres (Retzleff 2001:335 Chart 1) and could be reached by two *aditus maximi*. In the original Herodian design, this *orchestra* was covered with plaster painted with geometric designs (Retzleff 2001:93; Segal 1995:66). It is difficult to reconstruct the *scaena* and *scaenae frons* from the time of Herod, as the theatre underwent many changes and was refurbished several times over the succeeding centuries, but the *valva regia* and *hospitalia* can be reconstructed (Gleason 1996:224; Segal 1995:66-67).

4.3.2 Spatial Positioning

The location of the theatre within the overall site of Caesarea incorporates several cues that communicate meanings. The theatre is situated on the outskirts of the city (Figure 14), like the theatres at Bostra (Figure 13), Dor, and Petra. Many such structures, however, were integrated within the urban layout, as they were often constructed when the city was founded or refounded, and could therefore be included with other public structures constructed in the city centre, such as at Philadelphia. The other entertainment structures (i.e. hippodromes and amphitheatres) typically were found at the edge of the city, having been added after most of the buildings had already been constructed, and this also allowed for easier control and accommodation of large crowds (Weiss 1999:25).[4] Until recently, it was believed that the theatre at Caesarea was located outside the Herodian city walls. Recent excavation, however, has revealed a section of the city wall south of the theatre, and although the date of this wall is uncertain, it is thought to be Herodian at the latest (Holum and Raban 1996:xxxviii).[5]

The spatial positioning of the theatre in relation to the overall street plan of Caesarea is significant. Josephus mentions that the streets of the city were "laid at equal distances apart" (Josephus *JW* 1.21.7) following a grid plan, which seems to be borne out by the results of the excavations. There is a street that does extend towards the theatre (see Figure 14), and it may, in fact, have continued all the way to the building (Roller 1998:139). Most of the structures uncovered to date were erected in alignment

[4] Porath (1996:107) contends that all the public entertainment facilities, including the theatre, were usually constructed on the outskirts of Graeco-Roman cities.
[5] The excavators surmise that this wall encompassed the entire site. It may have originated in the Hellenistic period.

with this street plan.[6] Only two public structures have been uncovered whose orientations do not follow the grid. The Temple of Roma and Augustus appears to have been designed to face the inner harbour at a north-western angle, while the Temple Platform may have been partly aligned with the street plan and partly oriented along the same lines as the temple itself (Porath 1996:107-109; Kahn 1996:145). Likewise, the theatre faces north-northwest, looking out towards the sea (Segal 1995:64). The relationship of this orientation to the Promontory Palace will be discussed in Section 4.3.4.

A paved elliptical area has been found behind the *scaena*, which Segal (1995:68-69) refers to as the *postscaenium* (Figure 16). It appears that this plaza was added in the third century AD (Frova 1993:274), but this may have been a formalizing of a previously existing space used for the gathering of the theatregoers. Gathering space was found behind the *scaena* of theatres throughout Imperial times, such as at Leptis Magna (Figure 10), and Herod had also visited the Theatre of Pompey in Rome with its porticoes (Figure 11). Herod followed Vitruvius' guidelines in the design and construction of his theatre (Roller 1998:94), so he would have included the requisite porticoes. The plaza at Caesarea is of an unusual shape, not unlike the plaza behind the *scaena* of the theatre at Dugga in North Africa. Rather than following the typical rectangular or square design, it has a curved design (Frova 1993:274; Segal 1995:68-69).[7]

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[6] For example, the hippodrome and the villa located east of it run parallel to the north-south streets, and the Promontory Palace is situated in alignment with the east-west streets.

[7] For a more detailed discussion of the overall design of the theatre, see Frova (1966) and Segal (1995:64-69). For a more detailed discussion of the orchestra design, see Retzleff (2001:93, 99, 124, 129-130, 136-137, 154-156).

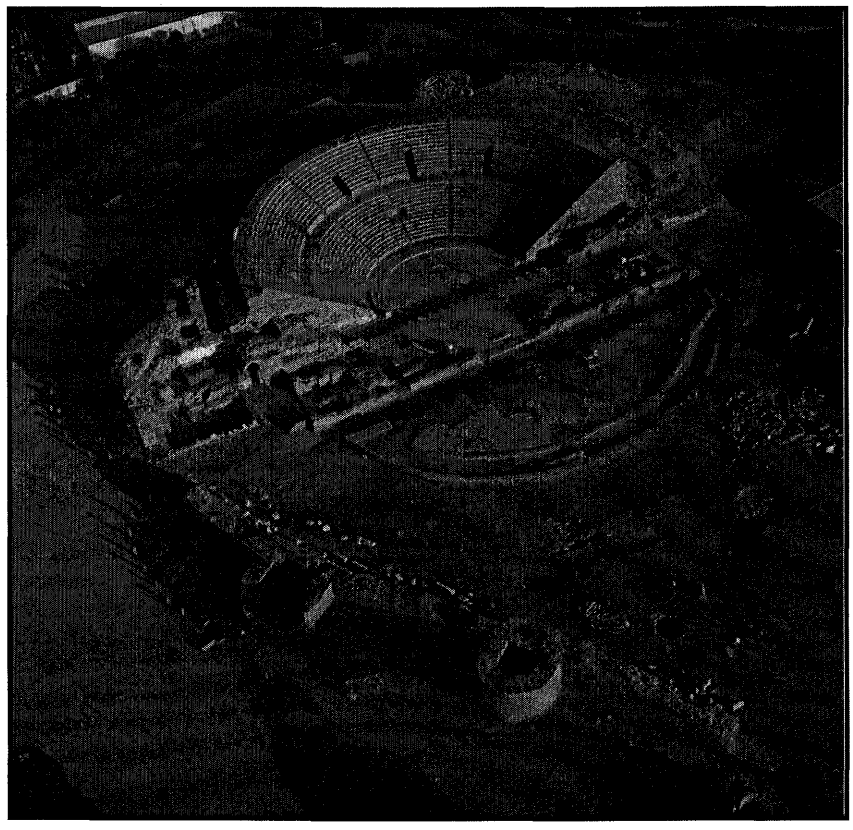

Figure 16: Theatre and Elliptical Gathering Space at Caesarea
(Holum et al. 1988:Figure 51).

Segal (1995:19-20) and Weiss (1998:80, 1999:27) state that topography was the deciding factor in the spatial positioning of theatres, as most theatres in the region are partially constructed on a natural slope. I disagree with this statement, and in the case of Caesarea, I do not believe that topography was the overriding factor in the placement of the theatre. The city of Caesarea was built on the coastal plain, and so there are no large hills in the immediate vicinity. The *ima cavea* was constructed on a small natural hill, but it would not have been impossible to construct a completely freestanding structure, such as the theatre at Bostra. The nearby hippodrome was constructed as a freestanding building, with a *vomitorium* running beneath the seats to provide access for distinguished guests and an entrance at one end of the arena for the use of the general populace (Porath 1995:16-17). Regardless of where the theatre was positioned, it would

need to be at least partially freestanding. It is therefore unlikely that the advantages of this particular small slope would have dictated the location of such an important structure in Herod's plan. The orientation of the theatre towards the Promontory Palace supports the assertion that there was an underlying purpose in the theatre's location beyond that of the natural topographical advantages.

4.3.3 Spatial Patterning

Two other large public structures have been uncovered in the vicinity of the theatre: the hippodrome and the Promontory Palace (Figure 17). These structures form

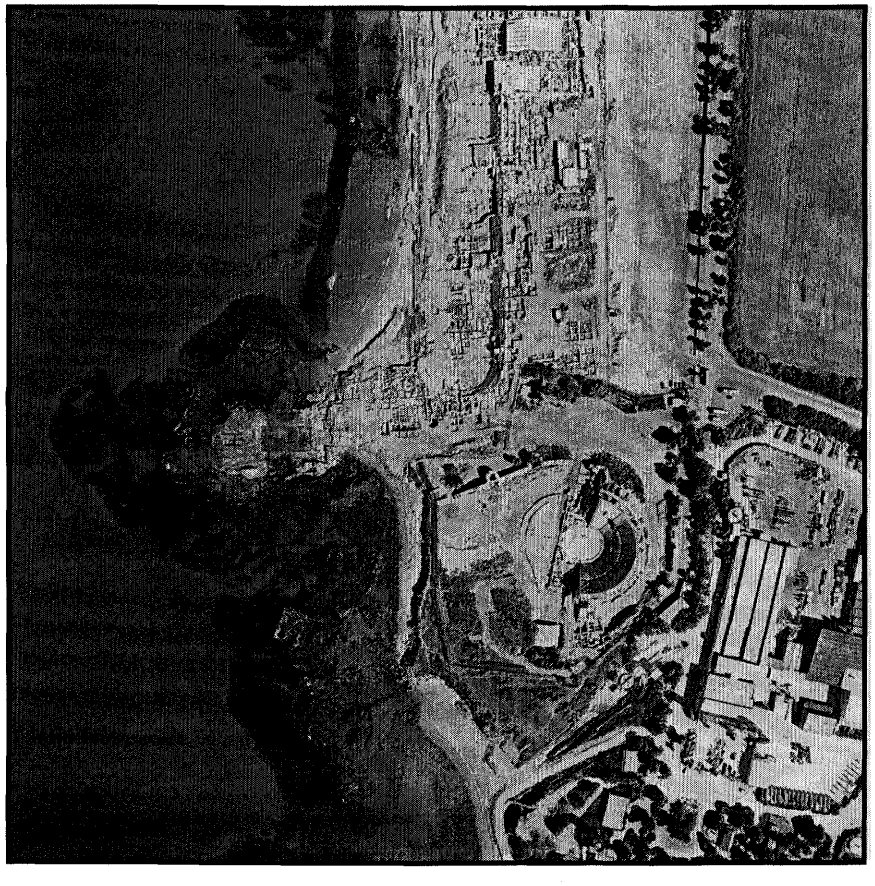

Figure 17: Theatre, Promontory Palace, and Hippodrome at Caesarea (Raban and Holum 1996:Aerial Photograph 4).

part of the spatial patterning of this area of the site. The hippodrome was first excavated in 1992 by the Israel Antiquities Authority under Yosef Porath and was almost immediately identified with the amphitheatre mentioned by Josephus (Porath 1994:188), as it was located "on the south side of the harbour, farther back" and was "large enough to hold a great crowd of people and conveniently situated for a view of the sea" (Josephus *JA* 15.9.6).[8] This discovery was unexpected because an amphitheatre had already been discovered in the north part of the city and dated to the Herodian period, although it appears that this is not a firm date (Roller 1998:141). A stone hippodrome had also been excavated to the northeast of the theatre (Humphrey 1975:1-24). It was constructed in the second century AD, and it was believed that any hippodrome from the time of Herod would have been a temporary one (Humphrey 1986:529), likely made of wood and erected where the stone one was later placed (Holum et al. 1988:84).

It now appears that Herod did build a permanent multipurpose entertainment structure at Caesarea (Figure 18). This building likely functioned as a combination stadium and hippodrome to accommodate both athletic and equestrian events, as its length and width lie somewhere between that of a Greek stadium and that of a Roman circus (or hippodrome). It is approximately 290 metres in length and the arena is approximately 50.35 metres in width (Humphrey 1996:124-125; Porath 1995:16). Starting gates for chariot races have been uncovered (Patrich 1999:72), as well as the possible remains of a barrier down the axis of the arena (Humphrey 1996:124). The long east side of the hippodrome consisted of two parallel walls with sandstone

[8]Porath (1995:23-27) and Humphrey (1996:122-123) give detailed explanations of the use of the term ἀμφιθέατρον by Josephus in this context. He may have simply been describing an "amphitheatral" building, meaning one with seats on both sides of the structure (i.e. a "double theatre").

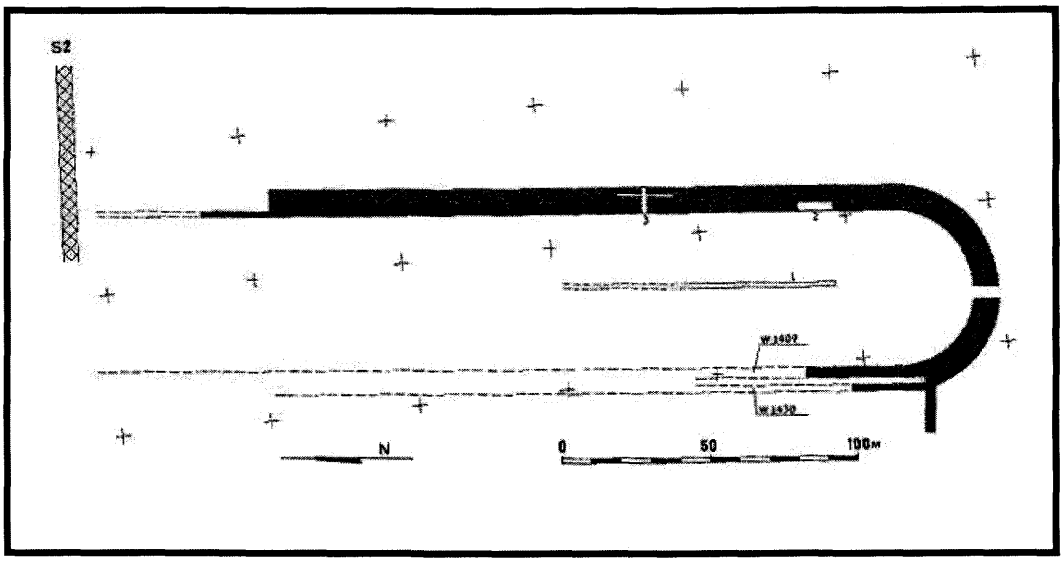

Figure 18: Hippodrome at Caesarea (Porath 1995:Figure 5).

fragments and soil fill between them. These supported a series of large stone tiers, which functioned as seats (Porath 1995:16). A *tribunal* has been found on this side of the seating directly across from the finishing line for equestrian events (Humphrey 1996:124-125). This *tribunal* may be the "tribunal in the great stadium", which Josephus (*JW* 2.9.3; *JA* 18.3.1) mentions in the context of the activities of Pontius Pilate (Humphrey 1996:124-125). The long west side of the structure has been largely destroyed by natural causes and human activities. This side consisted of a single solid wall, approximately 4.5 metres in width. The excavators believe there were no more than five rows of seats on this side, based on the width of the western wall and the lack of any evidence for tiers, as there was on the east side (Porath 1995:16-17).[9]

The Promontory Palace, which has been dated to the time of Herod on the basis of ceramic evidence, is located to the northwest of the theatre and is situated on a promontory that protrudes into the Mediterranean Sea (Figure 19). It was constructed on two levels, with the lower level functioning as a private residence for the king and the

[9] For a more detailed description of the hippodrome, see Porath (1995:15-27).

upper level functioning as a public reception building for official purposes.[10] The private part of the palace, which was approximately 44 by 80 metres in size, had two storeys, with a series of rooms around a central courtyard. The large pool in this courtyard functioned as a swimming pool or a fishpond, and was surrounded on three sides by colonnades. The existence of the colonnades is supported by the presence of a

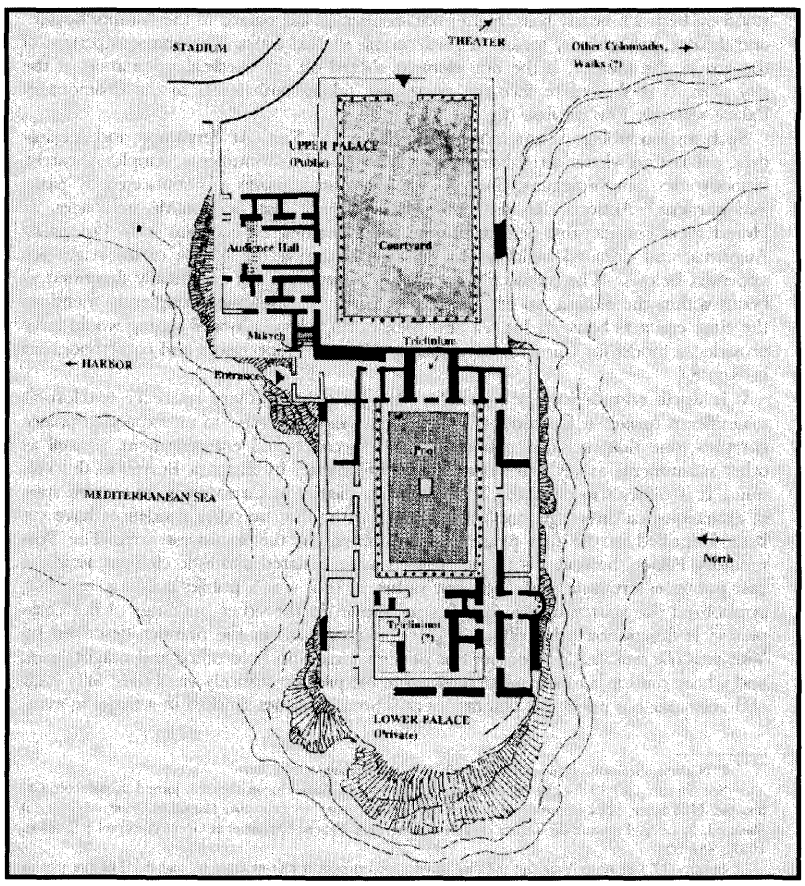

Figure 19: Plan of the Promontory Palace (Gleason 1996:Figure 2).

series of cuttings, measuring 140 by 60 centimetres and at least 70 centimetres deep, which are situated 70 centimetres apart. These cuttings served as planters for greenery.

[10] Many of the Hellenistic and Romanized palaces in the Near East, including governors' palaces in the area of the former Seleucid kingdom, as well as the Hasmonean Winter Palace at Jericho, Herod's Third Winter Palace at Jericho, and his Western and Northern Palaces at Masada, included both private, residential areas and official or ceremonial public areas, and contained similar features, such as swimming pools and porticoes (Nielsen 1999:115-129, 155-163, 181-208).

Between these planters would stand the columns of the colonnades, giving a distance between columns of 2.3 metres typical of Herodian palaces. The walkways around the pool have a uniform width, which also attests to the existence of the colonnades, as the walkways extend to the line of the planters that would have bordered them (Burrell 1996:240; Netzer 1996:197-198).

The public, upper portion of the palace[11] contained a porticoed courtyard, measuring approximately 42 by 65 metres. This courtyard was likely adorned with various plants, as was the area around the pool in the lower palace. On the north side, a series of rooms covered an area measuring roughly 23 by 56 metres. One of these rooms was an audience hall, with an aisle on either side partially delineated by columns, and the north end contained a hypocaust system designed to dispel the cold (Burrell 1996:240-241; Gleason 1996:208-213).[12] The layout of this upper level of the palace is not unlike Vitruvius' description of the proper features necessary in the houses of "the most prominent citizens . . . holding honorific titles and magistracies," whose homes were often the scenes of "both public deliberations and private judgements" (Vitruvius *On Archit.* 6.5.2).

4.3.4 Spatial Interrelationships

The three public structures in the southwest area of Caesarea were interrelated in a significant manner. Recent excavations have revealed that the Promontory Palace, the hippodrome, and the theatre were part of a large complex in the Herodian period (Figure

[11] This upper level dates to at least the Roman period, but Burrell (1996:240) and Gleason (1996:208-227) postulate that it was part of Herod's original palace.
[12] For more detailed descriptions of the two levels of the Promontory Palace, see Burrell (1996:240-245), Gleason (1996:208-227), and Netzer (1996:193-207).

20). The connection of such structures is not without parallels. The hippodrome and theatre Herod constructed north of the palaces at Jericho are joined together, with the theatre located at the north end of the racecourse (Figure 21). Attached to the back of the *cavea* of the theatre was a building, measuring 70 by 70 metres and situated on a podium 8-12 metres high. This building contained several rooms and a central peristyled courtyard, and likely functioned as a reception hall or a gymnasium

Figure 20: Promontory Palace, Hippodrome, and Theatre looking East (Gleason 1996:Figure 1).

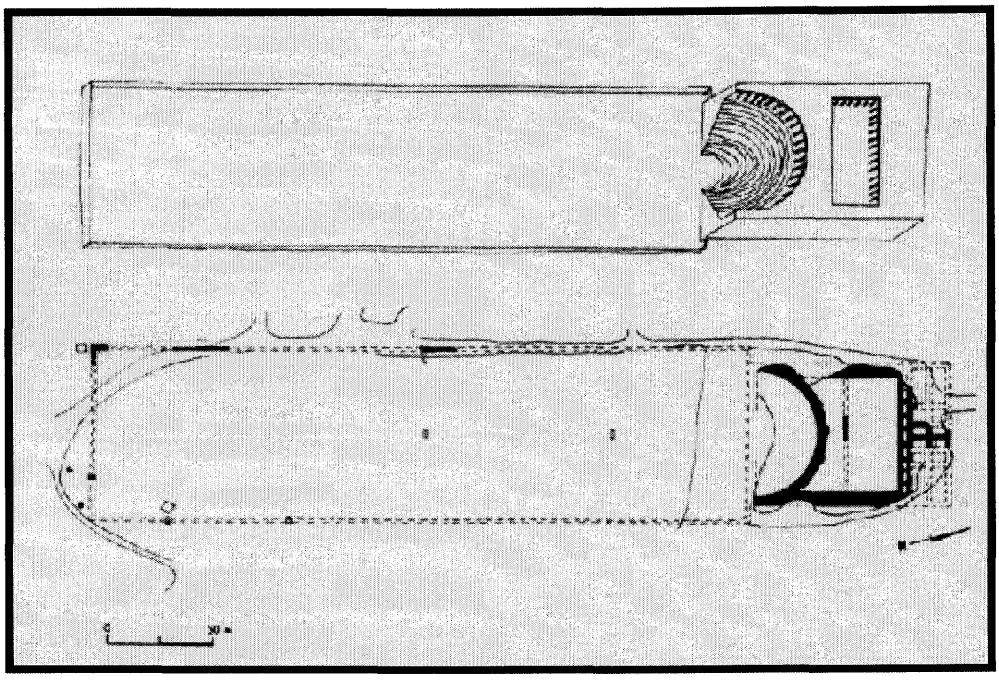

Figure 21: Hippodrome and Theatre at Jericho (Segal 1995:Figure 130).

(Netzer 1996:202-207; Roller 1998:173-174; Segal 1995:87-89). The palace and hippodrome (labelled circus) at Antioch were located next to each other (Figure 22). At Caesarea, the palace sits at a right angle to the hippodrome with the upper level courtyard and audience hall in immediate relationship to the curved end of the entertainment structure in which the main entrance was located. The north wall of the palace bonds with the western wall of the hippodrome, while a smaller wall leading off the courtyard abuts the southern end of it (Figure 23) (Burrell 1996:240, note 46).

The palace was probably connected to the hippodrome and the theatre "by means of gardens and shaded walks" (Gleason 1996:212) in the open space between them. A special *ambulatio* for the distinguished visitors to use, leading to the *vomitorium* located on the east side of the building, would have given access to the *tribunal*. Gleason notes that this "experience of returning to the palace from the *tribunal* through the gardens and colonnades that led to the *vestibulum* perhaps established the relationship as clearly as

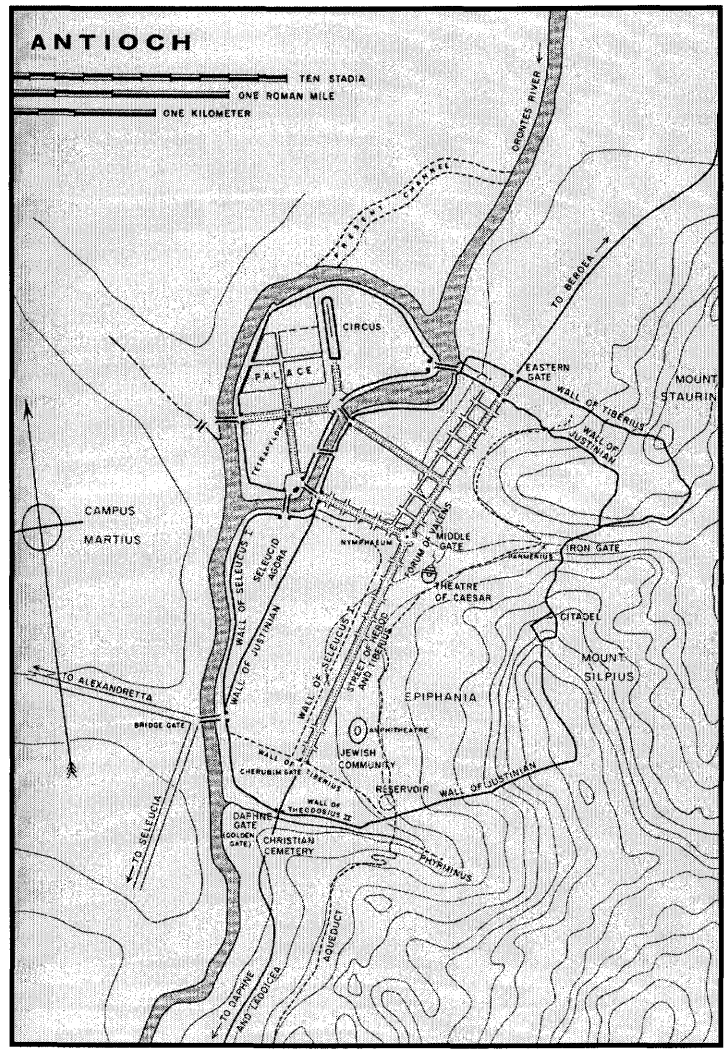

Figure 22: Site Plan of Antioch (Downey 1963:Figure 5).

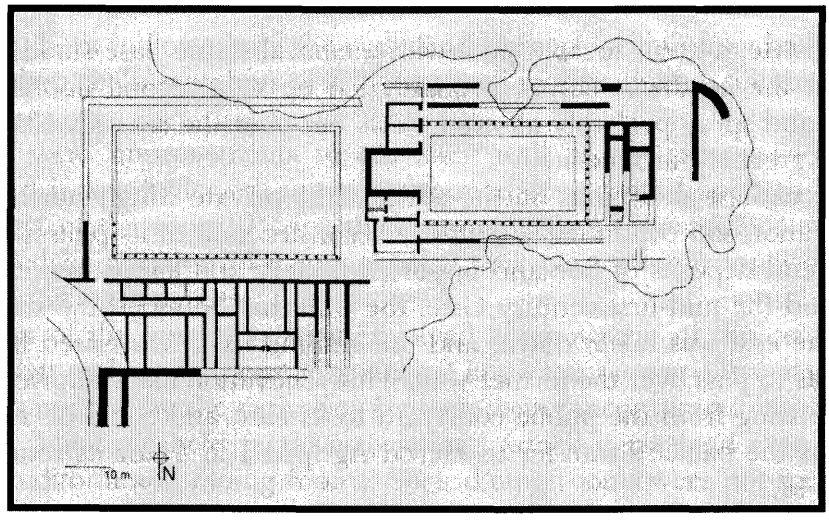

Figure 23: Plan of the Promontory Palace (Burrell 1996:Figure 5).

any formal architectural gesture" (Gleason 1996:223). Herod's affinity for greenery and porticoed walkways can be seen in his other palaces. For example, his palace at Herodeion in Judaea included gardens and fountains, and he also constructed a large garden complex, which included a pool and colonnades, at this site. Two bath buildings and a long, narrow terrace, which may have functioned as a hippodrome, were also part of the garden complex (Roller 1998:165-166). Herod's palaces at Jericho also included porticoes, pools, and gardens, as attested by literary evidence and the discovery of flowerpots (Roller 1998:171-173).

There is a clearly visible connection between the theatre and the Promontory Palace that seems to account for the position of the theatre, which is not aligned with the street plan. The theatre faces to the northwest, orienting it towards the palace, which would have been visible in all its grandeur from the theatre area (Figure 24).[13] The construction of a complex connecting entertainment structures, gardens and walkways, and a residence may have been largely inspired by Herod's visits to Rome, during which he would have observed the construction in the Campus Martius and around the Palatine Hill.[14] He would have visited the Theatre of Pompey (Figure 11), which was connected to a quadriportico with decorative greenery and displayed artwork, a *curia*, and the Temple of Venus Victrix, with the house of Pompey nearby (Favro 1996:59). In the

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[13] Gleason (1996:223-224) theorizes that the *scaena* and *scaenae frons* may have been temporary structures in Herod's day, allowing those seated in the *cavea* to view both levels of the palace, centrally located in front of them. She also proposes that the dignitaries sitting in the *tribunal* would have had an excellent view of Herod's palace framed nicely by the *valva regia*, based on the possible evidence for the design of temporary theatre buildings seen in wall paintings of the period. This evidence is inconclusive, and so this suggestion cannot be substantiated at the present time.

[14] Gleason (1996:208-227) discusses the connections between the architectural developments in Rome and those in Caesarea in great detail. Roller (1998) examines the influence of Rome on Herod's building program in general.

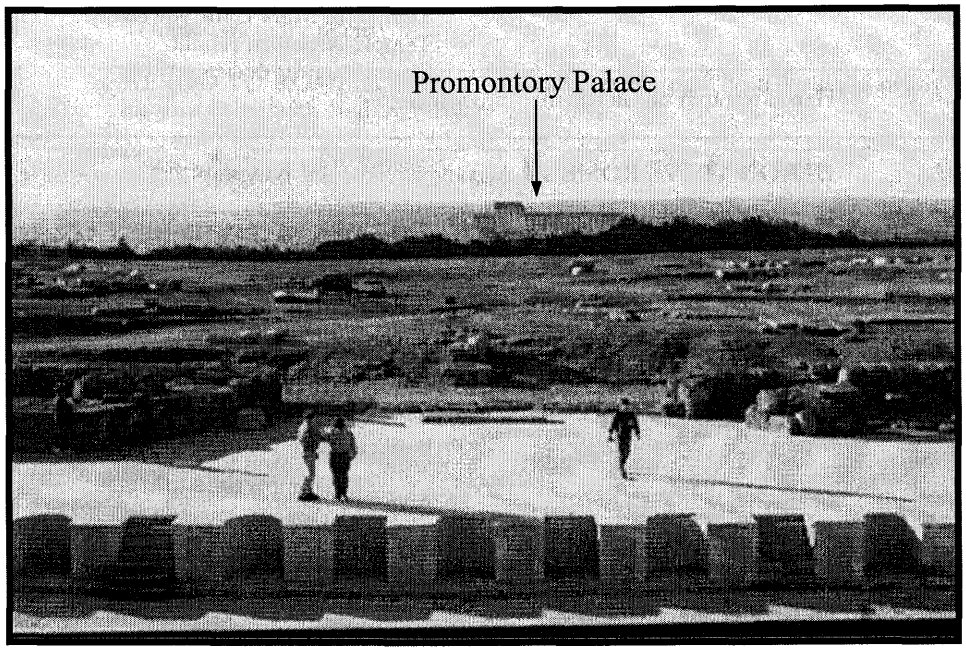

Figure 24: Computer Generated View of the Promontory Palace as seen from the area of the Theatre (Gleason 1996:Figure 8).

region of the Campus Martius, there were also *horti*, such as the Horti Agrippae, which were villas with fountains, trees, gardens, and terraces included in their design (Richardson 1992:112), and they also could include entertainment structures (Gleason 1996:213). Herod was also familiar with Hellenistic palace complexes in the East, such as that at Alexandria, which included "palatial residential quarters, a library, tombs, a theater, and a zoo" (Favro 1996:295 note 73), all joined by gardens and parks (Gleason 1996:212). Herod spent time in Antioch, where he would have been aware of the extensive Daphne park (Favro 1996:178-179, 318 note 87; Gleason 1996:212). The presence of garden space and porticoes in connection with theatres can even be seen in later times, as in the case of the theatre at Sabratha in Tripolitana (Figure 25), which was erected around AD 200 (Bieber 1961:206; Caputo 1959:*Tav.* 71).

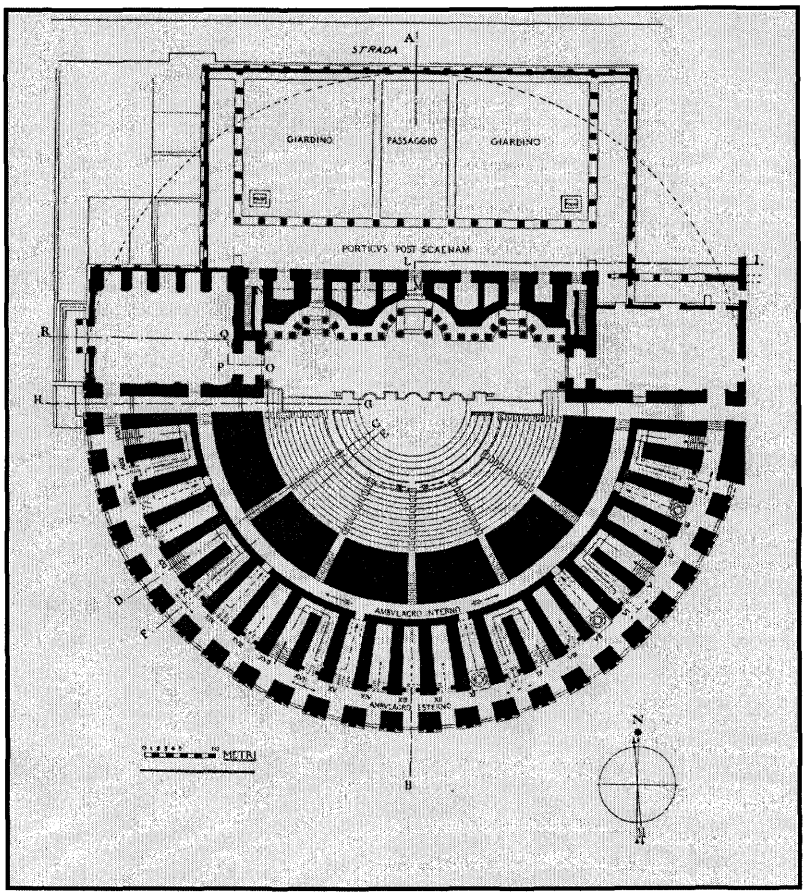

Figure 25: Theatre at Sabratha with Portico and Garden Space to the North (Caputo 1959:*Tav.* 71).

4.3.5 Contradistinction and Redundancy

There are several cues present in the built environment at Caesarea, as described in the above sections, which communicate meanings and affect behaviour. It is necessary for contradistinction to be present to enable the reception and interpretation of these cues, which must be distinguishable from their surroundings. This can be seen clearly at Caesarea. The theatre building is entirely constructed of stone, which gave it a sense of permanence. It is set apart, with open space immediately around it, which would make the structural components visible from a distance, rendering them easily noticeable. The unique design of the theatre as a structure within the built environment

also makes it readily distinguishable. Its orientation towards the Promontory Palace draws attention to the theatre, as this shift in orientation away from the orthogonal street plan is not common at the site. Most other structures fit properly into the grid. The connecting gardens and paths between the palace, hippodrome, and theatre separate the entire complex from its surroundings.

The structural components and spatial positioning of the theatre clearly set it apart as a public structure. The cues embedded in the spatial patterning in the southwest area and the spatial interrelationships among the structures can be decoded to inform people about the way in which these buildings are to be used. Taken together as the message, these many cues leave little doubt as to the intended meanings Herod was trying to communicate. The condition of redundancy is also fulfilled.

4.4 The Intended Meanings

The observation and interpretation of the cues leads me to several conclusions about what Herod was trying to communicate nonverbally through the built environment here. As a client king of Rome, his position was not entirely secure, and so it makes sense that he would use this channel to emphasize his importance to the local populace and to any visiting dignitaries. The theatre was obviously an expensive structure to erect, particularly as it was large, made of stone, and decorated, and so Herod was able to show his importance and wealth, as well as his goodwill towards the people, by providing them with such a building. As Levine (1975:12) points out, Herod "desired to achieve a rapprochement with the pagans of his realm by demonstrating to them and to Rome that the hegemony of a Jewish king did not constitute a threat to their cultural, religious or physical existence." Herod was not exclusively of Jewish descent. His

father was Idumaean, which made Herod "a half-Jew" (Josephus *JA* 14.15.2), and his mother was of Nabataean descent. This heritage made his claim to the throne tenuous, and his rise to power was accompanied by civil war. He ultimately owed his position to the backing of Rome (Roller 1998:1-2). It was necessary for Herod to court favour with the various cultural groups composing the population of Judaea, and providing entertainment may have been seen as one way to bridge the existing gaps among these groups. It has been suggested that Roman emperors from Augustus onward used the theatre and the activities held therein as a means of "project[ing] their own image and test[ing] their own popularity" (Jory 1990:66), and Herod may have had a similar goal in mind. In any case, the line of sight from the theatre area to the Promontory Palace served to emphasize the importance and status of the king in the eyes of the citizens of Caesarea and any visiting dignitaries. The avenues connecting the theatre with the other buildings in the complex and the greenery embellishing them contributed to the projection of Herod's power and importance. The king was able to control even nature, as seen in this urban context, not unlike the control Augustus exhibited in the landscaping projects in Rome (Favro 1996:179-180).

Herod was trying to Romanize the non-Roman sectors of the population at Caesarea. Josephus records an incident, occurring in the first century AD, in which there was a dispute over civil rights between the Jewish and non-Jewish sectors of the population, and the Jews asserted that the city belonged to them because its founder, Herod, was a Jew. The response to this statement was that the city had always been Graeco-Roman in character, "since Herod would never have erected the statues and temples which he placed there had he destined it for Jews" (Josephus *JW* 2.13.7). The comments of a rabbi from c. 300 AD, recorded in the Talmud, are also revealing, as he

refers to Caesarea as the "daughter of Edom", meaning essentially the "daughter of Rome" in the context of the time (Holum et al. 1988:107). This rabbi had noted the effect of the monumental Roman structures and Roman activities at Caesarea, as "Jews who lived there tended to be more Roman than Jewish" (Holum et al. 1988:108).[15] This process of Romanization began at Caesarea with Herod's building program, and it is interesting to note that entertainment structures played a significant role in this process.

Herod connected the entertainment facilities at Caesarea to himself in the minds of the people by connecting them to his palace, thus communicating his love of the spectacles and performances associated with the theatre and hippodrome. This love is supported by the writings of Josephus, who states that Herod also "built a theatre in Jerusalem, and after that a very large amphitheatre in the plain, both being spectacularly lavish" (Josephus *JA* 15.8.1).[16] He then established quinquennial games, which included gymnastic events, music contests, and possibly acting contests (Josephus *JA* 15.8.1), similar to those later described at Caesarea (Josephus *JA* 16.5.1). Josephus (*JW* 1.21.12) also records that Herod served as president at the Olympic games after extricating them from serious financial difficulties. He contributed monetarily to the festivals held in Rome in 12 BC. He was also given the position of *gymnasiarchos* on Kos (Roller 1998:116), and it appears that Herod was quite athletic himself (Josephus *JW* 1.21.13). His affinity for such entertainment is communicated, therefore, through the spatial interrelationships in the complex at Caesarea.

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[15] For further discussion of the effects of Romanization on the local population, see Holum et al. (1988:107-121). Weiss (1999:43-49) examines the effects of entertainment buildings on the Jewish population in the region.

[16] These structures have not yet been located. It is possible that Josephus was inaccurate in recording their existence, particularly considering the political and religious climate in Jerusalem at that time.

Herod also used nonverbal cues to emphasize the public nature of the theatre. It is set apart from other structures, with no residential buildings nearby except his palace. It is also found at a quite a distance from the harbour, where commercial structures were located. It is associated with other public/entertainment buildings, and with the hippodrome seems to form an entertainment district of sorts. The various nonverbal cues embedded in the built environment at Caesarea reinforce the fact that the primary function of the theatre was for entertainment purposes, such as the musical and athletic contests and possibly even the gladiatorial events mentioned by Josephus (*JA* 16.5.1).

4.5 How was Behaviour Affected?

After decoding the messages and interpreting the intended meanings, the local populace would have modified their behaviour accordingly. Many of the cues present in the structural components, spatial positioning, spatial patterning, and spatial interrelationships were designed to affect the flow of traffic into and around the theatre and between the buildings in the complex (i.e. the hippodrome, the Promontory Palace, and the theatre). The presence of a street leading to the theatre directed individuals towards that structure. Once they approached the building itself, the various *vomitoria* controlled the movements of the crowd before and after performances, which would curtail the jostling and confusion arising from the entrance and exit of large numbers of people. Once individuals entered the theatre, the various staircases led them to their seats in the *cavea*, while the dignitaries entered through the *aditus maximi*, allowing them to avoid the general mass of people as they took their seats in the *orchestra* or the *tribunal*. The *podium* dividing the *cavea* and the *orchestra* accentuated the separation between these two groups of people. In this way, the interpreted cues directed the

spectators to their appropriate places in a ranked seating arrangement.[17] Gathering space behind the *scaena* provided an established area for the crowd to gather before, between, and after performances, which would prevent congestion in the area. The connecting gardens and shaded avenues between the theatre, hippodrome, and public part of the palace with its reception hall provided control, directing traffic between these structures. This would have been particularly important during festivals or celebrations, such as the quinquennial games, that would have precipitated a large influx of people into the city, and therefore, to these buildings.

The greenery accompanying the avenues connecting the buildings in this complex affected the behaviour of the citizens of Caesarea. Favro (1996:179) describes the effect such areas had on the populace in Rome, as this "green space within the city appealed to the eye and provided residents an escape from their crowded living and working conditions. Once inside a large urban park, it was easy to forget the teaming city outside." The connecting shaded walkways and gardens within Herod's palatial and entertainment complex must have had similar effects on the attitudes and behaviour of Caesarea's residents.

The view of Herod's palace from the theatre, as well as the connecting paths, served as a constant reminder of Herod's importance, status, and benevolence in providing entertainment for the people. This undoubtedly affected the responses of the citizens to their king. The inaugural games, and the association with the hippodrome, solidified the function of the theatre as an entertainment building, and this remained its primary purpose throughout the centuries to follow.

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[17] Small (1987:85-93) discusses this issue of ranked seating in the context of Greek *cavea* in the Roman period.

CHAPTER 5

GERASA

The city of Gerasa (modern Jerash) is located in the valley of the Chrysorhoas River in Jordan (Figure 1). The site's South Theatre will be examined in detail in this chapter. Excavation and conservation of this theatre began under George Horsfield in 1925, after John Garstang was appointed as the first Director of the Department of Antiquities in Jordan (Harrison 1925:98; Horsfield 1926:2). Some of the findings, as well as epigraphic evidence, were published in 1938 in Kraeling's book on the site (Kraeling 1938:19-20; Welles 1938:398-400, 442-444). Further restoration work was conducted between 1953 and 1956 to facilitate the use of the theatre for an annual Jerash Festival of Drama and Music (Kirkbride 1960:123-127), and with the creation of the Petra/Jerash project, the theatre continued to be a focus of the work at the site during the 1970s and early 1980s. It also was surveyed as part of the Australian "Roman Theatres" project under Frank Sear in 1994 (Sear 1996:217-230). Other structures in the south part of the city have been examined in recent years, including the Sanctuary of Zeus (Seigne 1986:29-106) and the Oval Plaza (Segal 1997:75-78). As a result of this activity, the south area of Gerasa presents a built environment ideally suited to the application of the nonverbal communication approach.

The seven distinct elements involved in nonverbal communication can be identified at Gerasa. The senders are the city officials responsible for the construction and placement of the theatre, as well as the wealthy citizens who contributed to the

financing of the project. The receivers are the local populace, a diverse group of Semitic, Greek, and Roman origin. The channel is the built environment, specifically the South Theatre and the surrounding structures. The messages, the intended meanings, and the behavioural effects will be discussed below.[1] Finally, the context in this case is the first and second centuries AD in the Near East.

5.1 The Senders, Receivers, and Context

There is evidence for prehistoric occupation at the site of Gerasa, but as a recognized city, it was founded early in the Hellenistic period by Macedonian and other Greek settlers, likely as part of the general influx of such groups into the area following the activities of Alexander the Great (Freeman 2001:440). They naturally brought their language and elements of their Hellenistic culture with them, which set the stage for later developments at the site. There were also citizens of local Semitic descent, and evidence of Nabataean occupation has been uncovered. Nabataean coins and fine ware are present, as well as a unique bilingual inscription in Nabataean and Greek. A possible Nabataean temple has been located in the area of the Byzantine Cathedral, and there are elements of Near Eastern sacred architecture in the Sanctuary of Zeus. Its association with the South Theatre could also reflect Nabataean ritual practices[2] (Graf 1986:785-796; Segal 1988:23, 39 note 25), although connections between theatres and temples are not uncommon in the Graeco-Roman world as well.[3] One of the contributors to the construction of the theatre was a veteran *decurio* according to a Greek inscription found

[1] See Sections 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5.
[2] For a discussion of the Nabataean architectural elements and associations, see Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4.
[3] See Section 5.3.4.

in the theatre (Welles 1938:399)[4]; this inscription, along with Latin ones discovered at the site, provides evidence for Roman presence at Gerasa.

Direct contact with the Roman Empire began with the "freeing" of Gerasa and the other cities of the Decapolis[5], a league of ten cities in the region, by Pompey in 63 BC. This event was recognized by the citizens of Gerasa as significant, evidenced by the fact that all succeeding dates were reckoned from this year. Prior to this, Gerasa had been part of the Seleucid Empire. It now became part of the province of Syria, but it continued to function much as before. In AD 106, Trajan annexed the Nabataean Empire and created the new province of Arabia, to which he added the city of Gerasa. This likely had little effect other than a change in the recipient of tax revenues (Freeman 2001:427-442). Emperor Hadrian visited the city in AD 130, and in fact may have spent the winter there. This momentous occasion was marked by the construction of the Triumphal Arch south of the city (Millar 1993:106).

During the first century AD, construction on several buildings at Gerasa began (Figure 26). Epigraphic evidence reveals that work in the Sanctuary of Zeus was begun in AD 22/23 (Welles 1938:373-374),[6] and the South Theatre itself was constructed during this century, finally being dedicated in AD 90/91 or AD 92/93, according to inscriptions found in the theatre building (Retzleff 2001:76-77; Van Elderen 1974:2). Epigraphic evidence[7] indicates that, at the very latest, the street plan was established in the second half of the first century AD (Segal 1988:45, note 91), and the Oval Plaza was laid out in the latter part of the first century AD or early second century AD following

[4] Inscription #52 in Welles (1938).
[5] The nature of the Decapolis is discussed in such works as Browning (1982:11-17) and Graf (1986:785-796).
[6] Inscription #2 in Welles (1938).
[7] Inscription #50 in Welles (1938).

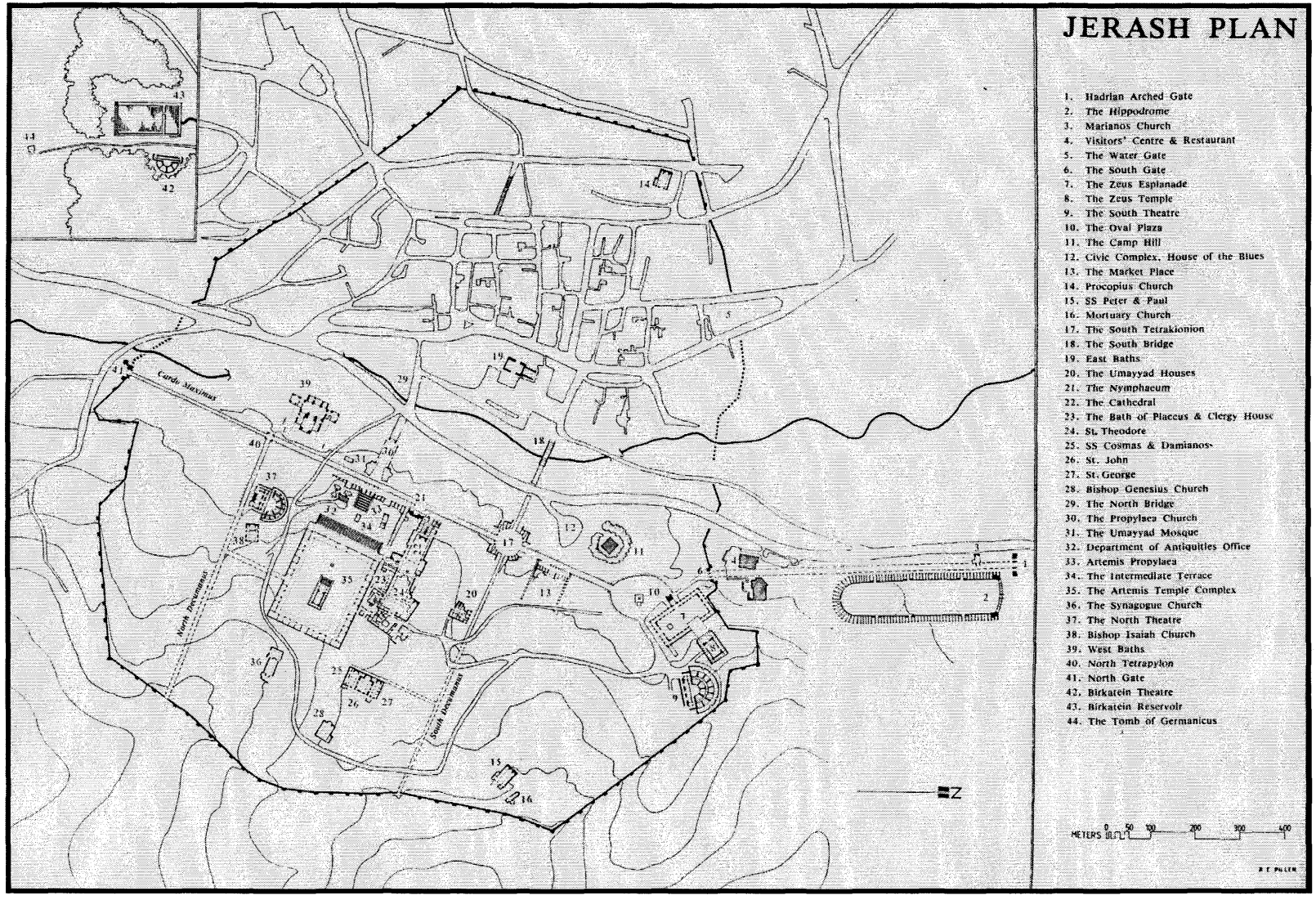

Figure 26: Site Plan of Gerasa (Zayadine 1986)

the construction of the Sanctuary of Zeus and the main colonnaded street, or *cardo maximus* (Browning 1982:37; Segal 1988:44-45, note 83).

5.2 The Channel

As at the site of Caesarea, the built environment at Gerasa communicated nonverbally with the people performing their daily activities within it. The southernmost part of the site is of particular interest in this study (Structures 7, 8, 9, and 10 on Figure 26); in the immediate vicinity of the South Theatre lie the Sanctuary of Zeus, consisting of the Temple of Zeus on the upper terrace of the hill and a *temenos* area located on a lower terrace immediately below the temple, and the Oval Plaza. At the one end of the Oval Plaza, a short street, called the South Street, connects the Oval Plaza with the South Gate, while the *cardo maximus* extends northward through the city from the other end of the plaza. These structures will be discussed in detail in Section 5.3.3.

5.3 The Message (i.e. the Cues)

Many cues are evident in the structural components of the South Theatre at Gerasa, which influenced behaviour and affected the ways in which citizens and visitors would have regarded this building. The aspects of spatial positioning within the city, spatial patterning of constructed elements in the south district, and the spatial interrelationships of these various elements embody the nonverbal message being communicated. Contradistinction and redundancy are present and aid in the reception and interpretation of the cues.

5.3.1 Structural Components

The South Theatre (Figure 27) has an overall width of about 76 metres (Sear 1996:224) and was built of stone. It was constructed in much the same manner as the theatre at Caesarea, with the *ima cavea* and bottom of the *summa cavea* resting on the natural slope of a hill and the upper part of the *summa cavea* rising above it on an artificial slope. A *praecinctio* divides the *cavea*, with fourteen rows of seats separated

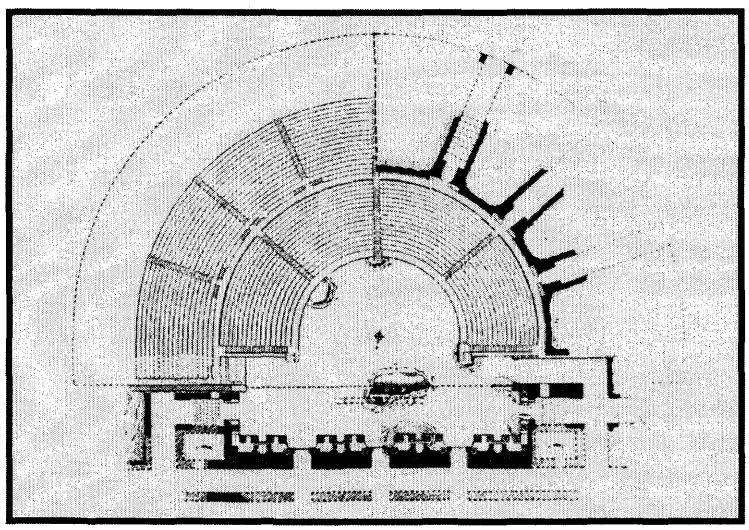

Figure 27: Plan of the South Theatre (Segal 1995:Figure 102).

into four *cunei* in the *ima cavea* and fifteen to seventeen rows of seats separated into eight *cunei* in the *summa cavea* (Figure 28) (Segal 1995:75). The number of seats suggests a seating capacity of 3000 to 5000 people (Walmsley 1984:7). In the outer *cunei* of the *ima cavea*, the seats are numbered from 1 to 278 using Greek letters (Sear 1996:225). Because the uppermost part of the *cavea* is missing, it is unclear whether or not there was a portico extending along the top of the *summa cavea*. A large fallen column shaft found in the vicinity may have been part of such a portico (Harrison 1925:98). Six barrel-vaulted *vomitoria* extend beneath the *summa cavea* and give access to the *praecinctio*, from which spectators could arrive at their seats in either section of

Figure 28: *Ima* and *Summa Cavea* of the South Theatre at Gerasa; note the *praecinctio* and *podium* (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

the *cavea* (Segal 1995:75). These *vomitoria* descend at a steep angle, and to accommodate this, they are roofed by means of stepped arches corresponding to each tier of seats above (Kraeling 1938:19-20). The *praecinctio*, including the top row of seats in front of it, measures 2.19 to 2.21 metres in width. A row of high-backed seats with footrests was found in the *praecinctio*. The back of the best-preserved of these seats survives to a height of 87 centimetres, but by analogy with other such seats found in the large theatre at Philadelphia and the West Theatre at Gadara, it likely was just over a metre in height originally (Sear 1996:225).

The South Theatre exhibits the typical Roman semicircular *orchestra* and *cavea*. The *orchestra* is stone-paved, with a diameter of 19.91 metres (Sear 1996:226), and has a stone *podium*, with a height of 1.44 metres (Retzleff 2001:335 Chart 1), emphasizing its separation from the *cavea* seats (Figure 28). On top of the *podium* were cuttings measuring on average 17 centimetres by 6 centimetres, and these were used to support a guardrail or screen, likely made of perishable materials (Retzleff 2001:112). Between

the *cavea* and the stage area, two barrel-vaulted *aditus maximi* give direct access to the orchestra from either side (Figure 29) (Segal 1995:76). Above each *aditus maximus* is a

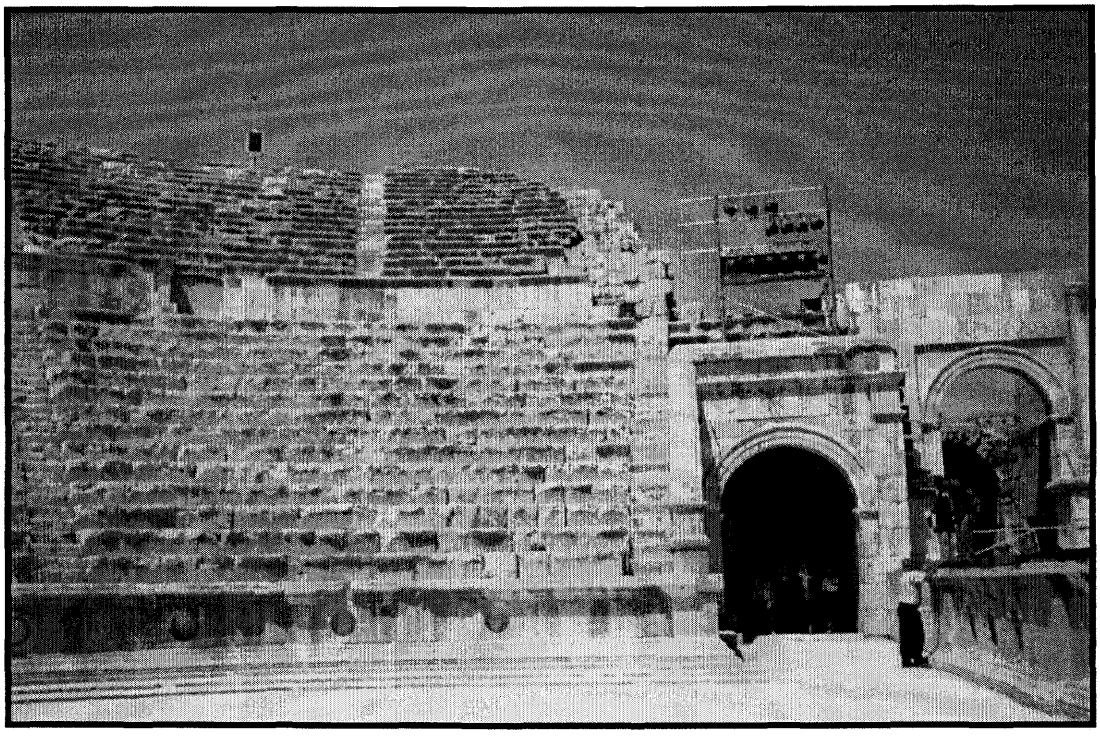

Figure 29: *Aditus Maximus* and *Tribunal* on the West Side of the South Theatre (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

tribunal for distinguished visitors (Kraeling 1938:20; Sear 1996:220). The elaborate *scaenae frons* was partially preserved, and some reconstruction of it has taken place, revealing the *valva regia* and the two *hospitalia*, all three of which follow the same design and are the same size (Figure 30). This similarity is unusual in a Roman theatre, as the *valva regia* typically is larger and more elaborately decorated than the *hospitalia* (Segal 1995:76). [8]

[8] Further details of the South Theatre can be found in Browning (1982:125-131), Sear (1996:217-230), and Segal (1995:75-77).

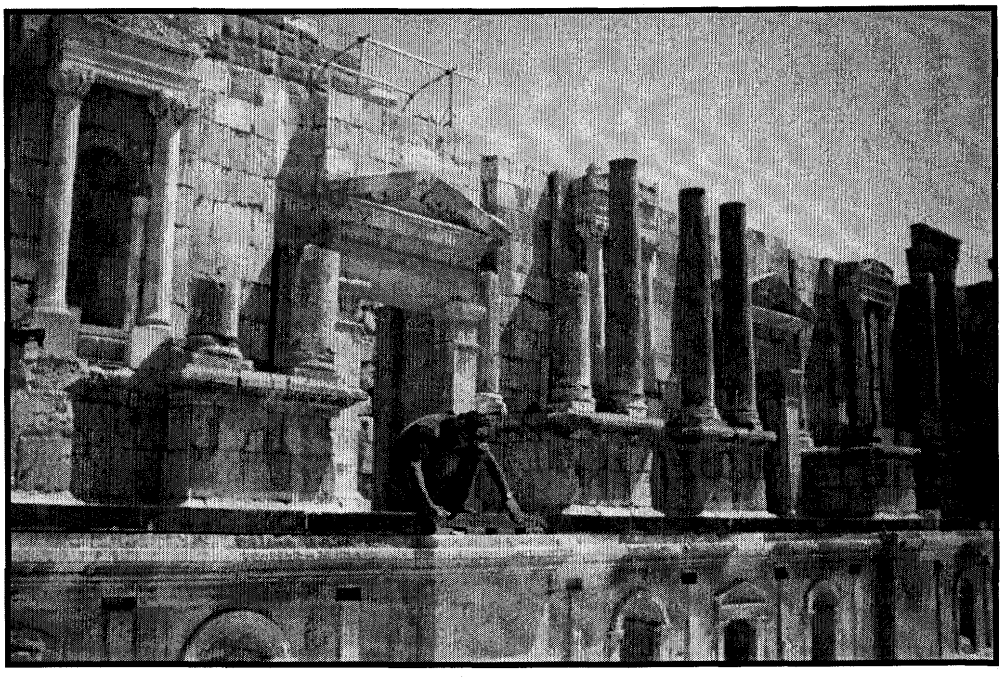

Figure 30: *Scaenae Frons* in the South Theatre (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

5.3.2 Spatial Positioning

The spatial positioning of the South Theatre communicates nonverbal messages to the observer. It is located in the south part of the city on a steep hill and is adjacent to the nearby Sanctuary of Zeus also built on this hill (Figure 26).[9] It is situated within the city walls. The theatre would have been among the first structures encountered by anyone upon entering the Oval Plaza when approaching the city from the south. Its location undoubtedly would have had a significant visual impact on the viewer, and taken together with its size, design, and decorative elements, it would "stand out prominently in the urban landscape" (Segal 1995:20). Visual impact seems to have played an important role in Roman city planning (Schwartz 1998:150).

[9] This relationship will be discussed further in Section 5.3.4.

The theatre does not appear to be integrated into the overall street plan of Gerasa. The *cardo maximus* joins the north end of the Oval Plaza at an angle of approximately 38 degrees, and so the main colonnaded street does lead to the general area of the theatre and the Sanctuary of Zeus by directing traffic into the Oval Plaza, from which one could access the surrounding structures. The short South Street does the same at the opposite end of the plaza (Browning 1982:80-82). The orientations of the theatre, the Sanctuary of Zeus, and the Oval Plaza, however, clearly do not follow the street grid seen in the rest of the city, because the sanctuary was in existence prior to the imposition of the street plan (Segal 1995:28), and the orientations of the theatre and Oval Plaza are dictated in part by their interrelationships with the sanctuary.[10] The temple is designed to face the hill to the northeast, on which the earlier Hellenistic settlement was established (Segal 1988:23, note 21 on p. 39). The theatre faces north, and this has been attributed to careful consideration of the angle and direction of the sunlight entering the *cavea* in order to prevent direct sunlight from interfering with the audience's view of the performances (Kraeling 1938:19).

As in the case of Caesarea,[11] the positioning of the South Theatre was not dictated by topography alone. The city of Gerasa is located in a river valley with numerous hills in the area, which potentially could have served as locations for the theatre. It would not have been topographically necessary to situate it in close proximity to the sacred precinct of Zeus, and this suggests that the connection of the theatre and the sanctuary was not merely one of chance. It is also worth noting that the North Theatre at

[10] See Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4.
[11] See Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2.

Gerasa, dedicated in AD 165/166,[12] was built on level ground, with the *ima cavea* being dug into the ground and the *summa cavea* being supported on an artificial substructure. The builders were able to integrate this theatre directly into the street plan without any specific topographical features determining the location (Clark et al. 1986:206-230; Segal 1995:73).

Behind the *scaena*, there was space for spectators to gather before, between, and after performances. Sear (1996:220) notes the presence of a *postscaenium*, but he seems to be referring to a passage rather than an area large enough to accommodate the theatre crowd (Figure 27). The area behind the *scaena* is flat and would have been sufficient to accommodate such a place of assembly (Figure 31), either informally or with porticoes, as for example, at Aphrodisias in Asia Minor (Figure 32).

5.3.3 Spatial Patterning

There are two other structural complexes in the south area of the city, which are of significance to this study: the Sanctuary of Zeus and the Oval Plaza. The Sanctuary of Zeus may have been the oldest sacred precinct at Gerasa (Kraeling 1938:17). It consists of a series of terraces, with a *temenos* area on the lower level, an upper terrace at the level of the base of the podium of the temple, and the temple situated on this podium (Figure 33). The *temenos* was a rectangular paved space (Figure 34), which was enclosed by a high wall. A flight of steps led up from the Oval Plaza to the main entrance centred in the long eastern wall. In order to maintain a level surface, subterranean corridors were built under portions of the outer perimeter of the *temenos*,

[12] This date was established on the basis of epigraphical evidence (Clark et al. 1986:229).

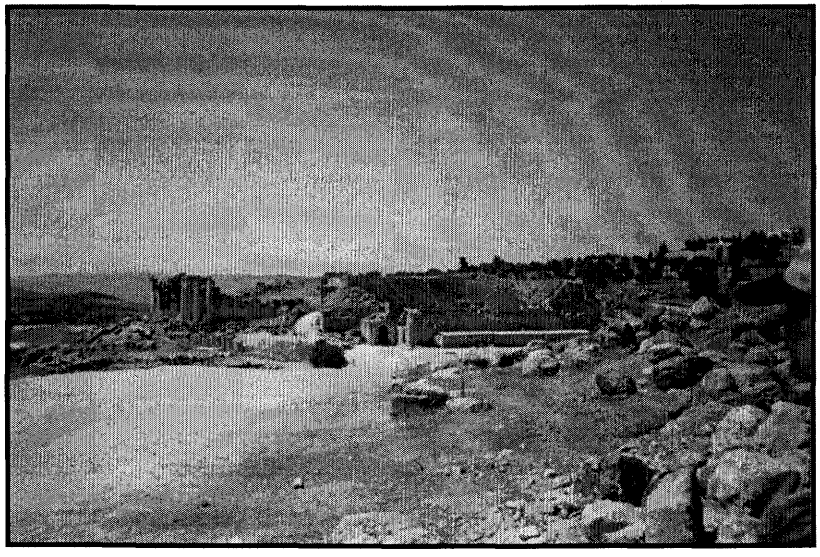

Figure 31: View of South Theatre from the North; note the flat space behind the *scaena* to the right of centre (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

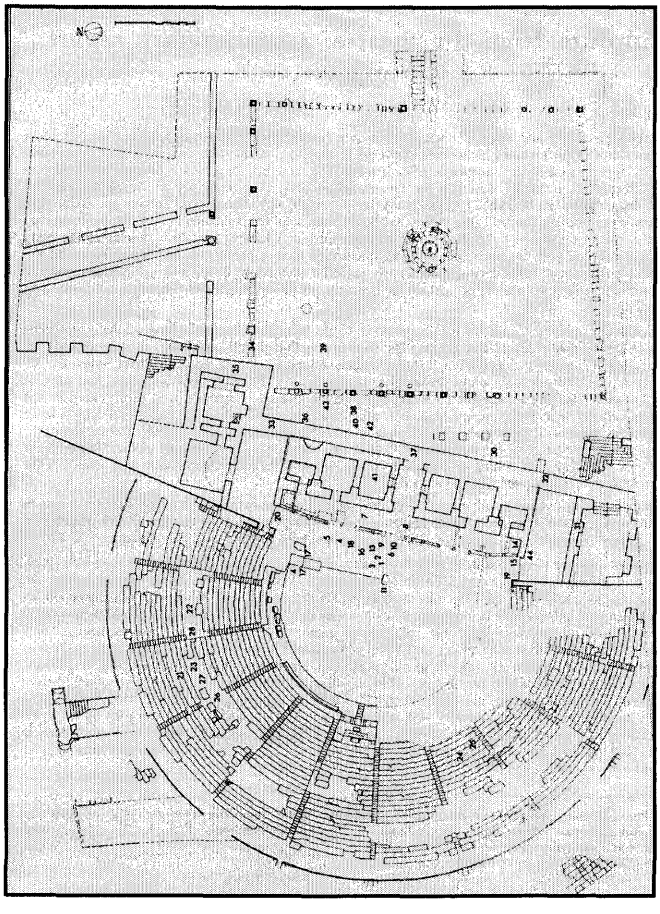

Figure 32: Theatre at Aphrodisias with Porticoed Plaza Behind the *Scaena* (Erim and Smith 1991:Figure 1).

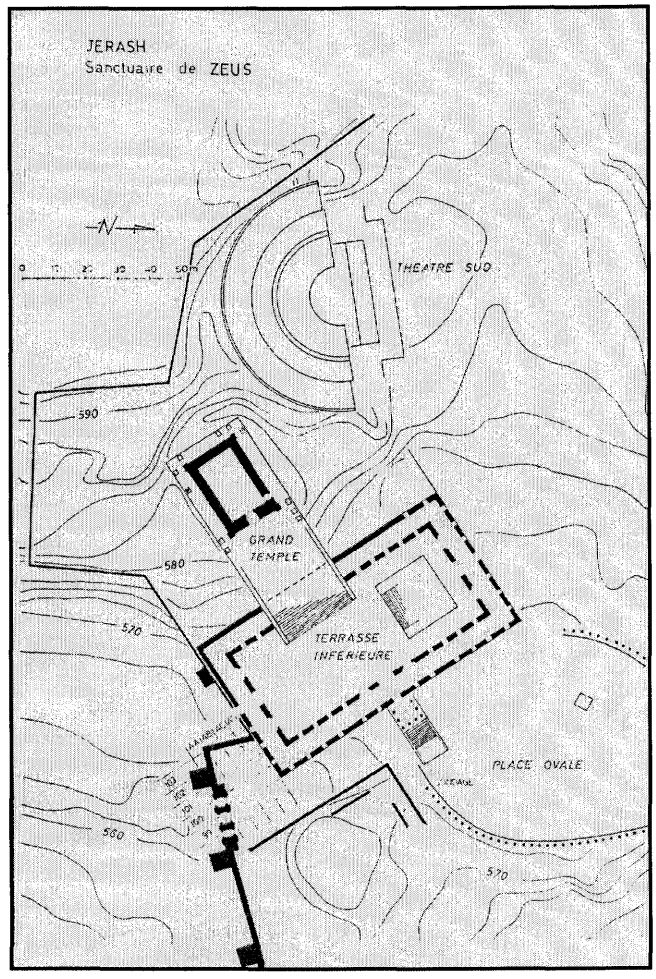

Figure 33: Plan of the Sanctuary of Zeus (Seigne 1986:Figure 1).

which supported the enclosure walls above. Around the perimeter ran a corridor, created by the construction of an inner wall and the outer wall of the *temenos*. The inner wall was broken at regular intervals by entrances giving access to the corridor, and in each of the outer north and south short walls, there was a central doorway corresponding to one in the inner wall, providing alternate means of entering and exiting the *temenos*. A wide flight of steps broke the inner and outer walls of the *temenos* on the west side, and led to the upper terrace and the podium on which the actual Temple of Zeus is situated. There was a structure at the north end of the paved area of the *temenos*, which may have been a raised altar platform or temple (Browning 1982:114-119; Kraeling 1938:18; Seigne

Figure 34: *Temenos* of the Sanctuary of Zeus (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

1986:30 Figure 1, 58 Figure 13). Such a "high place" is a regular feature in Near Eastern sacred architecture, and in that which is influenced by Graeco-Roman traditions as well. For example, the temple precinct at Baalbek has Near Eastern origins, with Hellenistic and Roman influences in later developments at the site. In the courtyard of that Temple of Jupiter stood two towering altars, the tops of each being accessible by steps (Figure 35). These altars are similar to those found at Machnaka near Byblos and Kalat Fakra near the source of the Adonis river (Ward-Perkins 1983:314-322). There was a "high place" at Petra with platforms and an altar (Hammond 1973:52). The foundations and stairs of an altar have been uncovered in the *temenos* of the Sanctuary of Bel at Palmyra (Browning 1979: 112-113).

The Temple of Zeus is fairly well preserved (Figure 36), and an inscription found on the architrave dates its dedication to AD 166. It replaced an earlier temple constructed in the first century AD, which likely replaced an even earlier one, as the

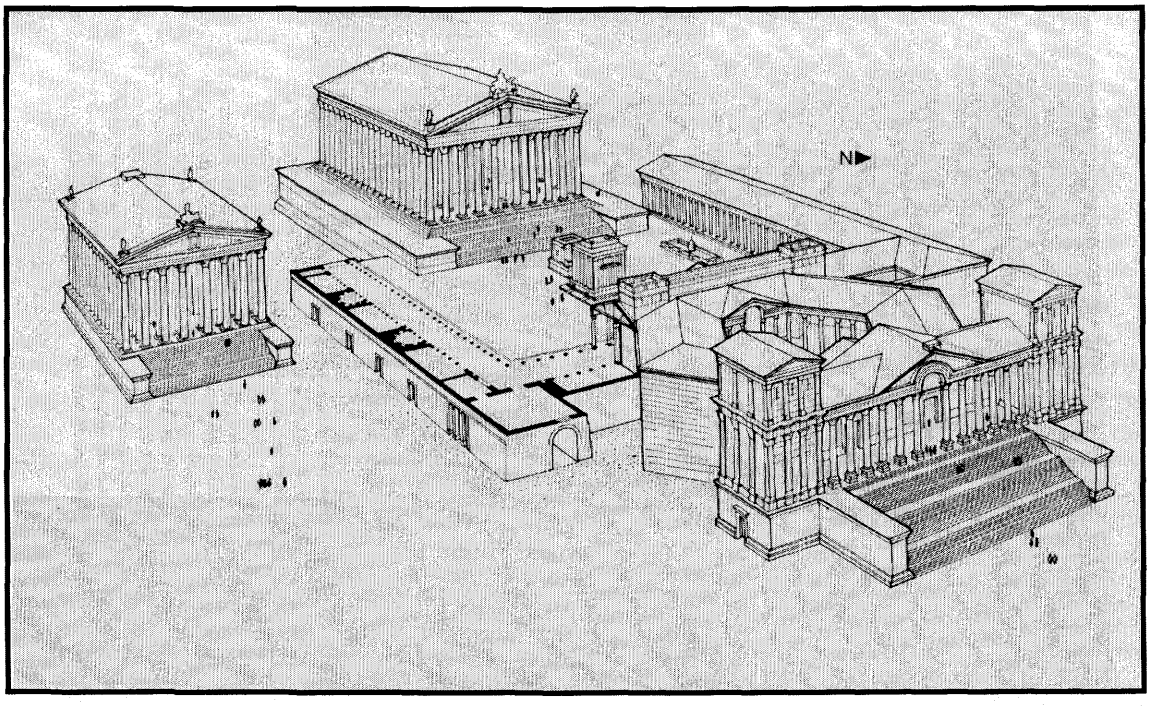

Figure 35: Sanctuary at Baalbek; note the high altars in the courtyard before the temple (Ward-Perkins 1983:Figure 202).

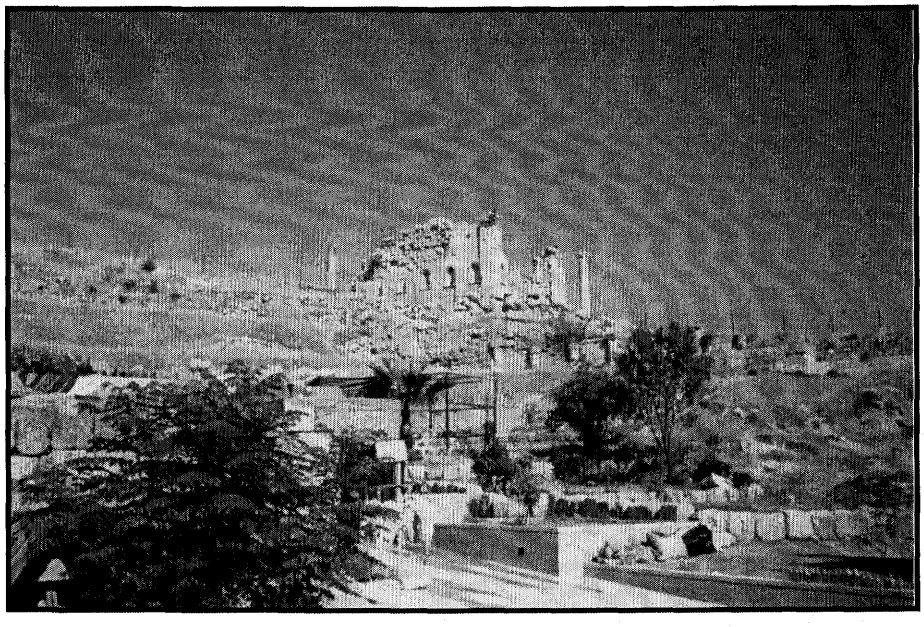

Figure 36: Temple of Zeus looking Northwest (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

orientation of the temple reflects the location of the original Hellenistic settlement situated on the "Camp Hill" to the northeast. It follows a typical Graeco-Roman design

(Figure 37), resting on a podium approximately 5 metres in height and measuring 28.25 by 41.25 metres, with steps leading up to the *naos*. A columned portico stood before the entrance, and these Corinthian columns, 14.84 metres in height, extended around the *naos* in a full peripteral colonnade. The interior consisted of a single room, with a shrine at the end opposite the doorway. A spiral staircase was constructed within the left *anta* (Browning 1982:119-125; Segal 1988: 23), and this staircase possibly gave access to the roof. The presence of spiral staircases in temple architecture can be seen, for example,

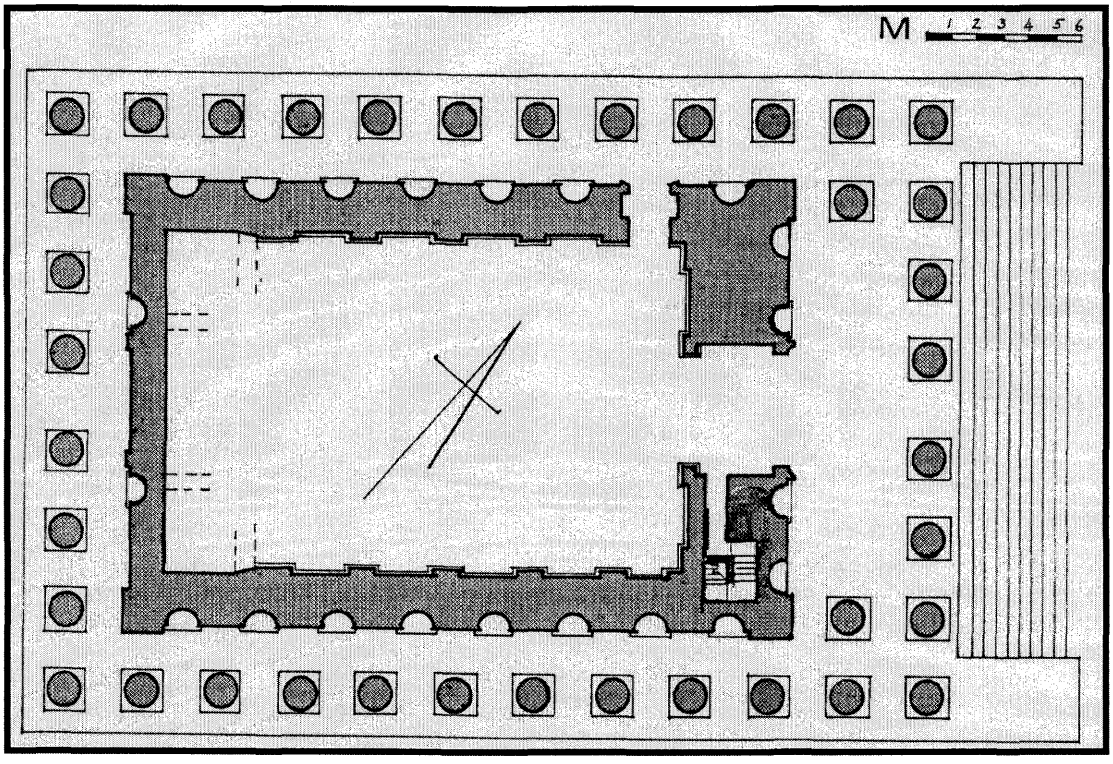

Figure 37: Plan of the Temple of Zeus (Browning 1982:Figure 56).

in the Temple of Bel at Palmyra, in which three such staircases led to the roof (Figure 38) (Ward-Perkins 1983:356).[13]

[13] For a more detailed description of the Sanctuary of Zeus, see Browning (1982:114-125), Segal (1988:23), and Seigne (1986:29-106).

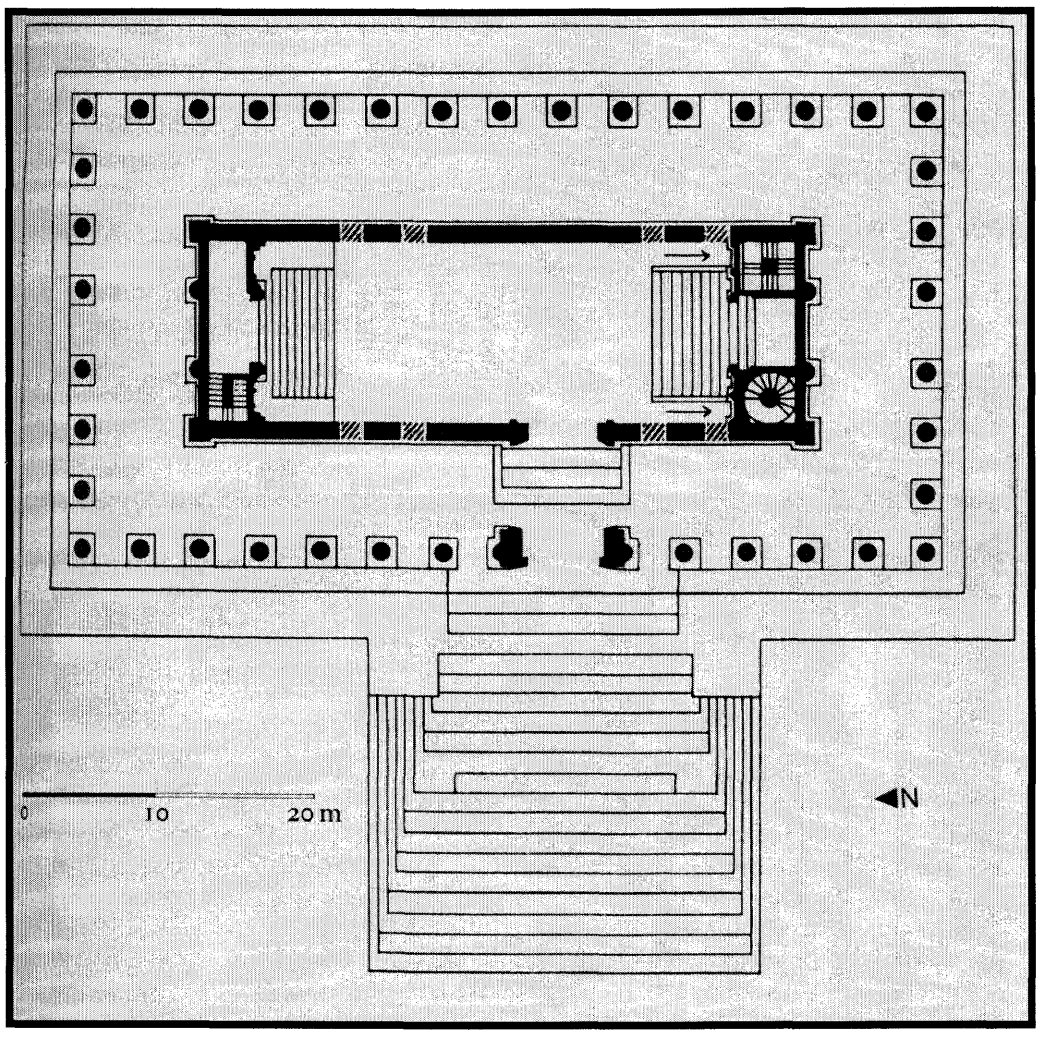

Figure 38: Temple of Bel at Palmyra; note the spiral staircases in three corners (Ward-Perkins 1983:Figure 232B).

The Oval Plaza was laid out in an oval-shaped depression between the hill on which the Temple of Zeus is situated and the "Camp Hill" on which the original Hellenistic city was located (Figure 39). It is 90 metres long running north-south and 80 metres wide running east-west, and it was surrounded by a colonnade of Ionic columns. At the north end, a decorative arch marked the entrance to the *cardo maximus*. A two-metre-wide sidewalk ran around the space (Browning 1982:131-134: Segal 1997:75-78).

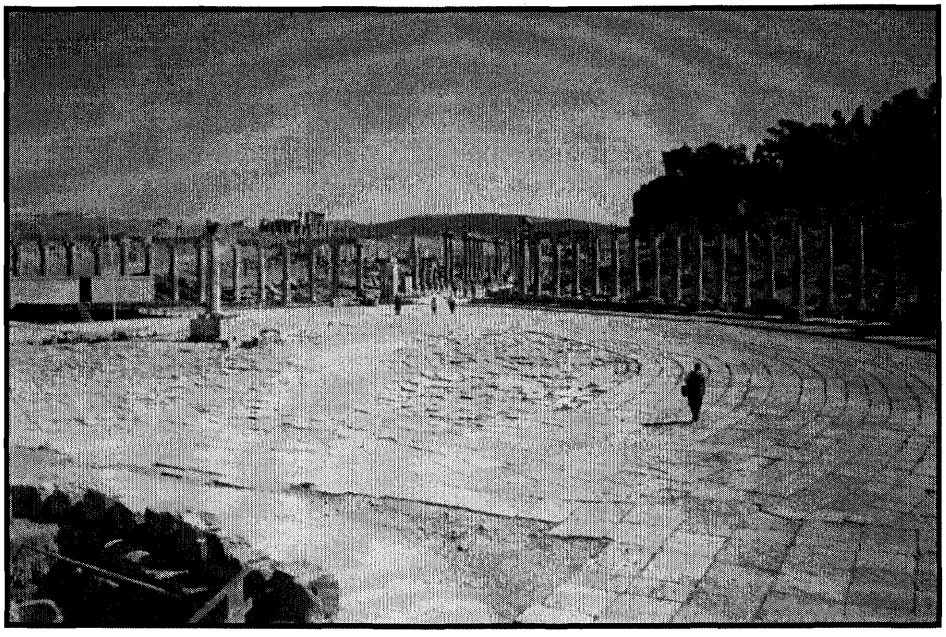

Figure 39: Oval Plaza at Gerasa looking North (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

At one time, an altar stood in the centre of the plaza and seemed to be a focal point (see Figure 33). It has often been called the Forum, although there is no real evidence to support its formal use as such. The shape of the plaza is unusual, but it was partially dictated by the topography, as the depression in which it lies was roughly oval. It was also designed to act as an intermediate space connecting the South Street leading from the South Gate with the *cardo maximus* (MacDonald 1986:55-56; Segal 1997:75). These streets were at drastically different angles, with the South Street lying at approximately 130 degrees off the city's orthogonal grid, and the plaza was designed to accommodate this sudden change in direction. The orientation of the *cardo* would have carried it directly into the Sanctuary of Zeus, and so a modification of the alignment was necessary. The curved shape of the plaza maintained pleasing visual continuity and softened the abrupt shift in direction from the South Street to the *cardo* (Figure 40). It also allowed the Sanctuary of Zeus to be included as much as possible in the overall street plan (Segal 1997:75-78).

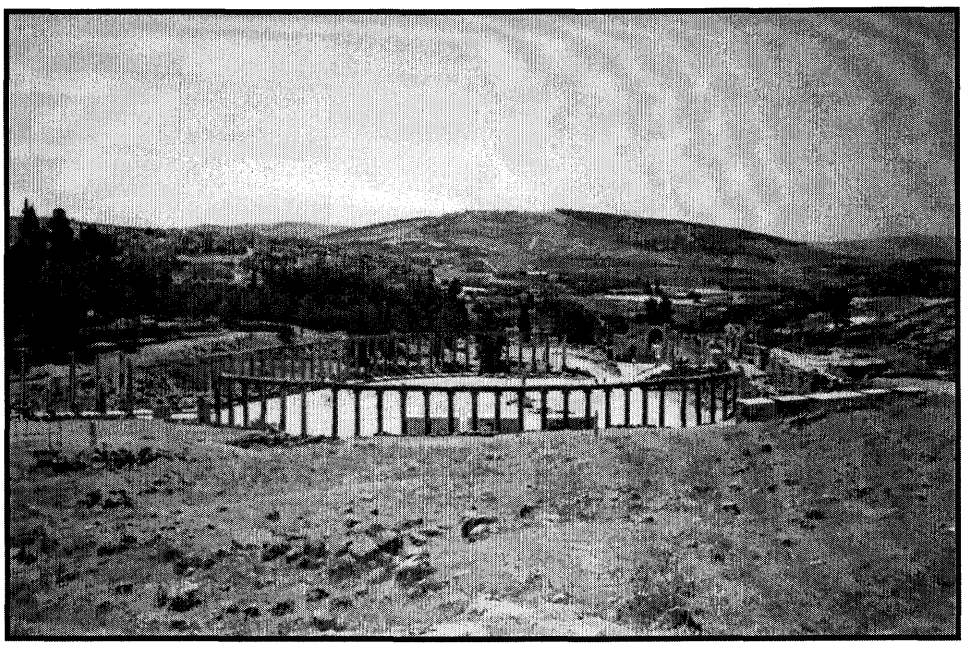

Figure 40: Oval Plaza with *Cardo Maximus* and South Street adjoining it, looking Southeast (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

A similarly shaped plaza was uncovered at Bostra approximately 16 metres east of the west gate (Figure 41). It apparently played the same role as the Oval Plaza at Gerasa, in that it was designed to disguise a shift in the orientation of the *decumanus maximus*, although this shift at Bostra was not as pronounced (Segal 1997:70-71). In both cases, the plaza was situated in close proximity to a city gate, which provided necessary open space immediately once inside the city.

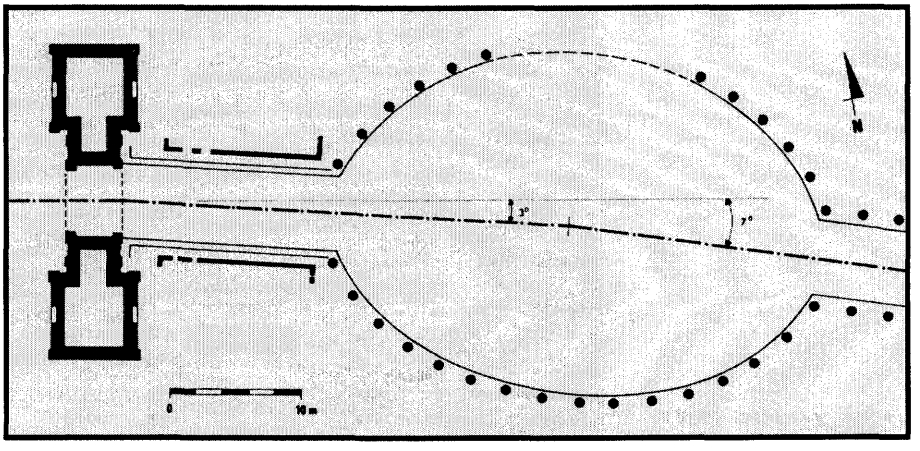

Figure 41: Oval Plaza at Bostra (Segal 1997:Figure 68).

5.3.4 Spatial Interrelationships

The interrelationships among the South Theatre, the Sanctuary of Zeus, and the Oval Plaza are significant (Figure 42). The South Theatre was situated to the west of

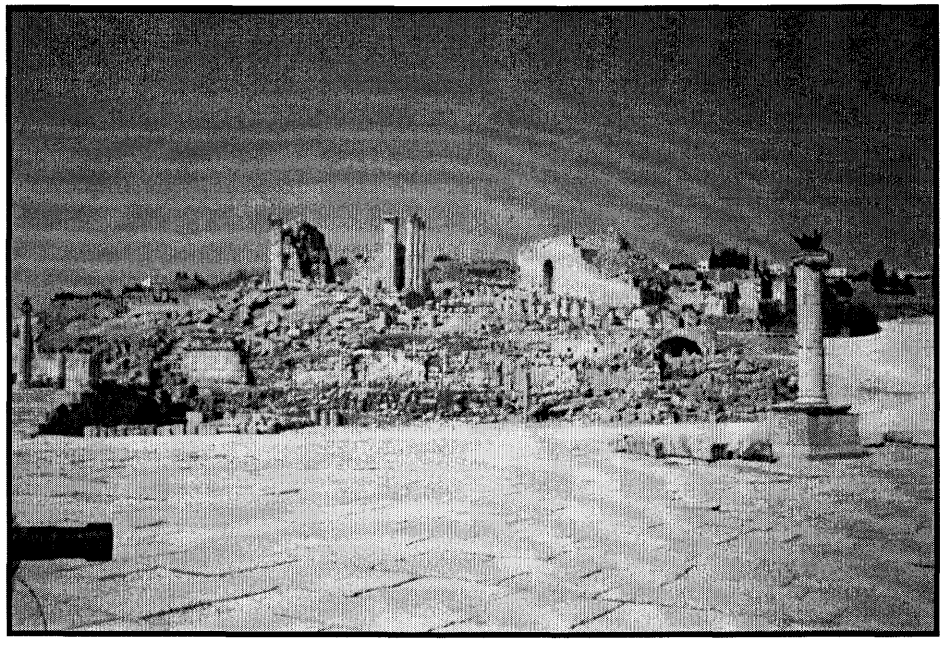

Figure 42: South Theatre, Sanctuary of Zeus, and Oval Plaza looking Southwest (Photograph by S. E. Stock).

the Temple of Zeus, having been constructed on the same hill. The slope of the hill dictates the most likely means of approach to the theatre. The *vomitoria* leading into the *cavea* open onto the upper terrace, and the access to these theatre entrances was from the level of the base of the temple podium (Figure 43). The doorway through the short north wall of the *temenos* provided access from this lower level of the sanctuary to the *aditus maximi*. No entrances to the theatre have been uncovered leading from the Oval Plaza or the *cardo*[14] (Browning 1982:133). The close physical association of the sanctuary and theatre would foster an intimate connection in the minds of the citizens of Gerasa.

[14] It seems likely that there was another way of accessing the theatre, possibly by means of a road to the north. This road would fit into the overall orthogonal street plan, but to my knowledge, no evidence for such a street has been uncovered to date.

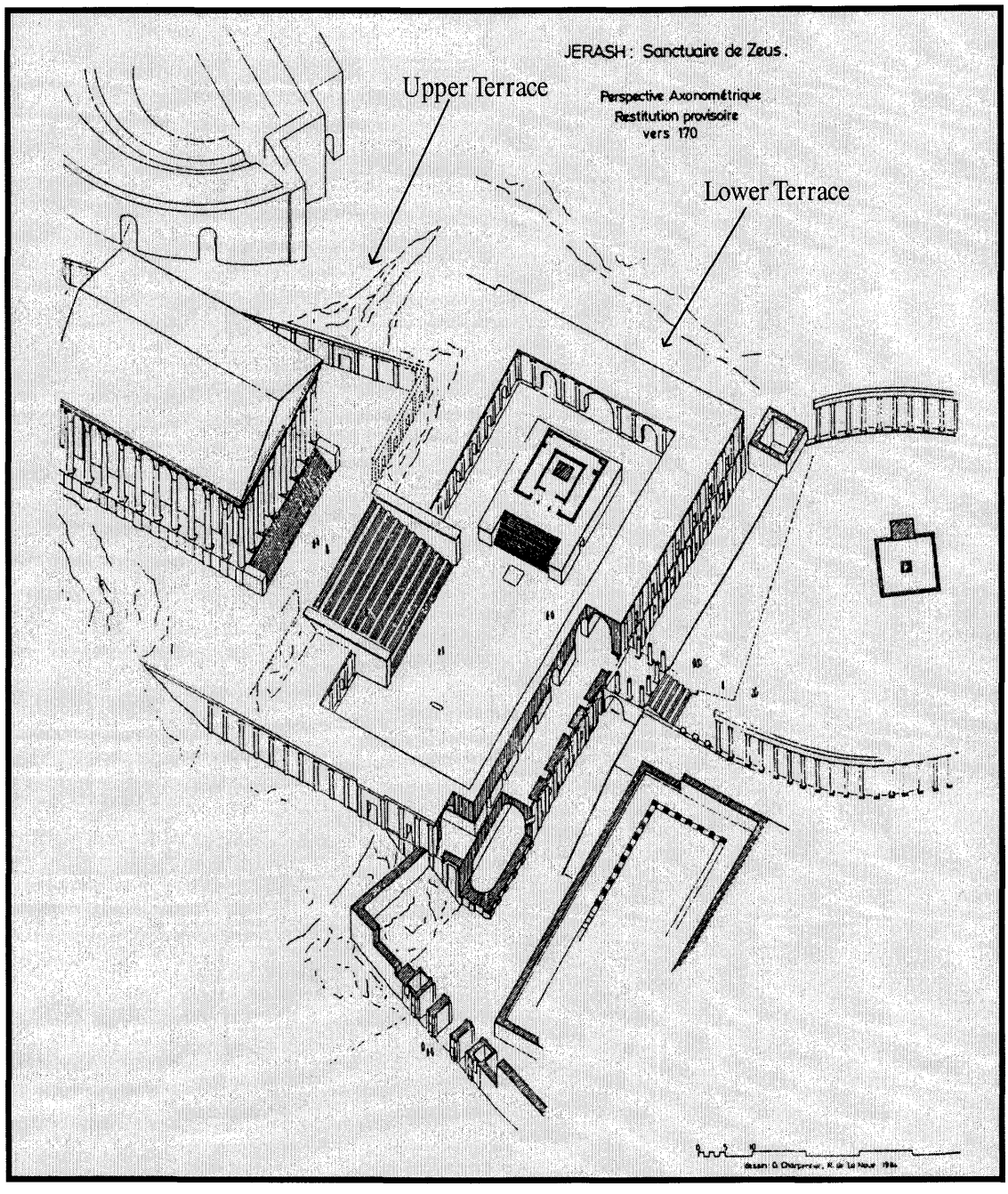

Figure 43: Axonometric View of the Sanctuary of Zeus (After Seigne 1986:Figure 13).

The association of a theatre with a temple precinct is not uncommon in the Graeco-Roman world. At Athens, the Theatre of Dionysos was built into the Acropolis, the top of which was sacred to Athena, and the theatre at Delphi was located within the *temenos* (Figure 44) (Segal 1988:39 note 27). The Sanctuary of Asklepios at Pergamon

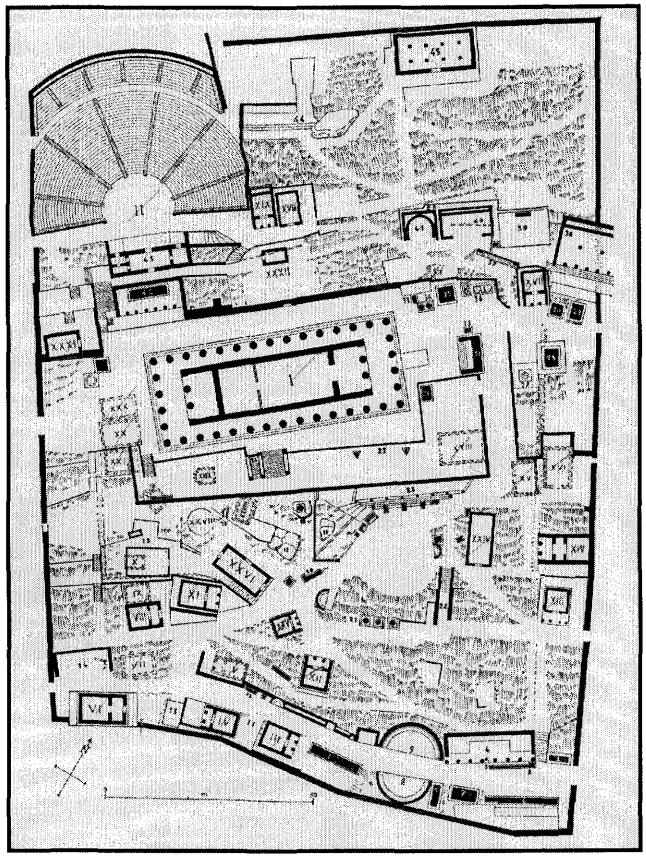

Figure 44: Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi (Berve and Gruben 1963: Figure 19).

incorporated a theatre (Figure 45), and at Ostia the theatre adjoined the porticoed square [mis]labelled the Square of Corporations, which had a temple within it (Ward-Perkins 1983:144, 284). In Rome itself, the seats of the Theatre of Pompey were designed to form a curved flight of steps leading to the Temple of Venus Victrix (Figure 11) (Gleason 1996:217), which was similar to the arrangement of curved steps leading to the small round temple at the top of the Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste (Sear 1982:25-26). Several Roman theatres in North Africa included "*cavea* shrines," situated at the top of the *cavea*, such as at Timgad (Figure 46) and Dugga (Figure 47) (Hanson 1959:59-64).[15]

[15] For a full discussion of the connections between theatres and temples in the Roman world, see Hanson (1959).

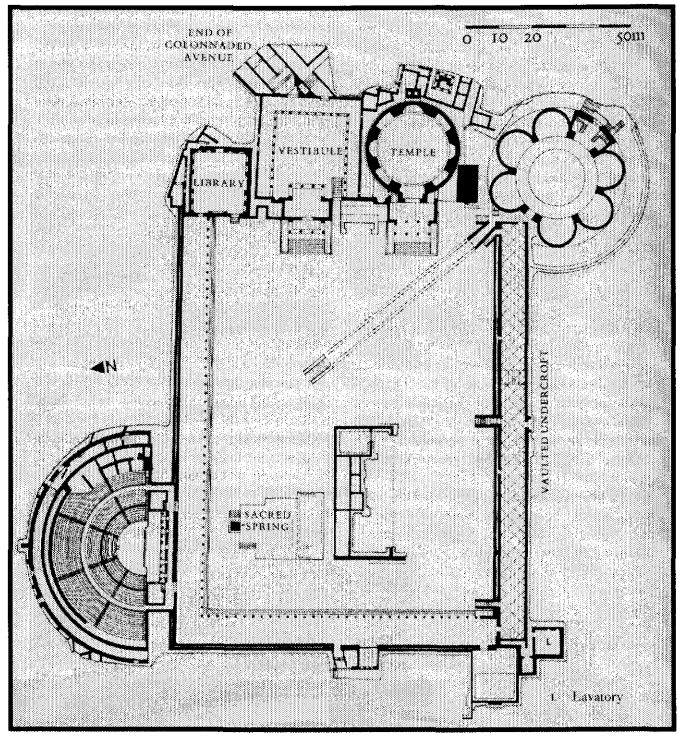

Figure 45: Sanctuary of Asklepios at Pergamon (Ward-Perkins 1983:Figure 182).

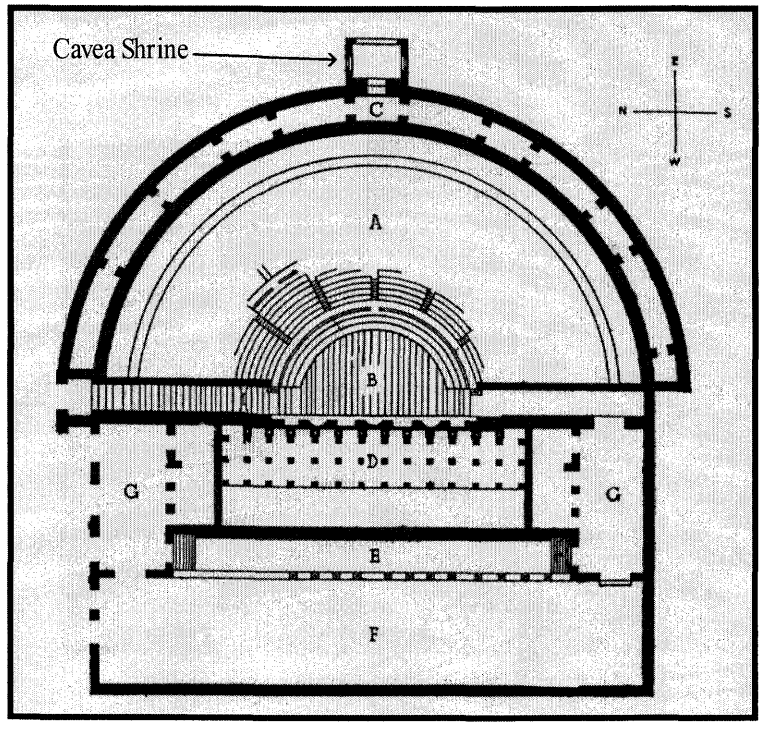

Figure 46: Theatre at Timgad with "*Cavea* Shrine" (After Hanson 1959:Figure 27).

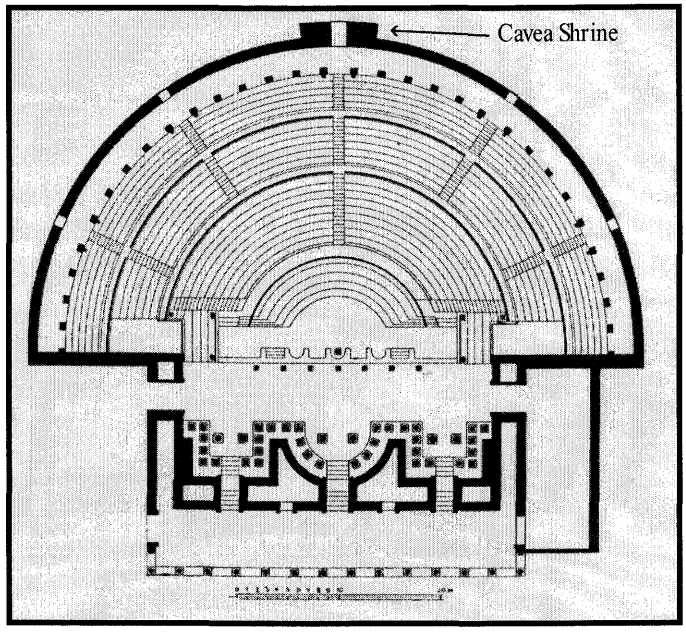

Figure 47: Theatre at Dugga with "*Cavea* Shrine" (After Hanson 1959:Figure 24).

The large theatre at Philadelphia has a square *exedra* at the top of the *summa cavea* (Figure 48), which is similar to these "*cavea* shrines" (Segal 1995:83). Dramatic

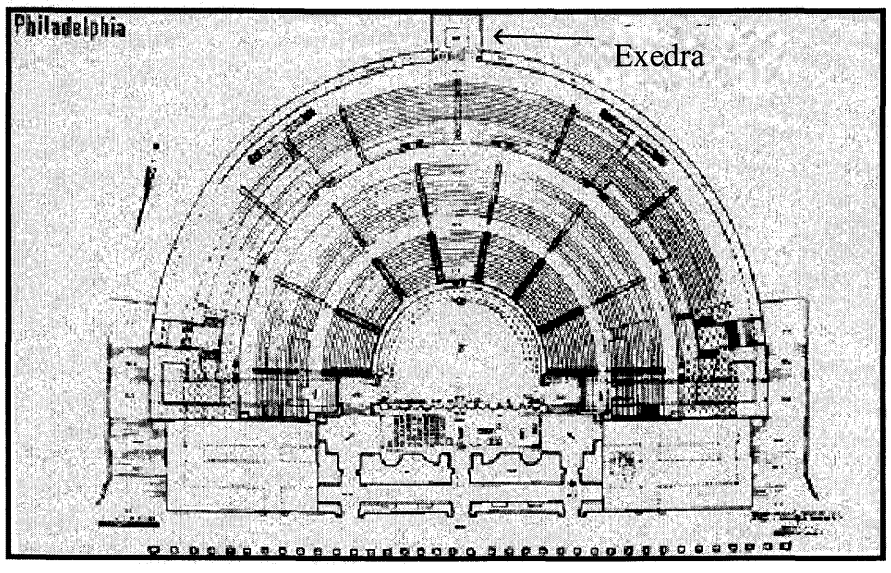

Figure 48: Large Theatre at Philadelphia with *Exedra* (After Segal 1988:Figure 20).

performances often were part of festivals held to honour various deities in the Graeco-Roman world, including Dionysos and Zeus (Csapo and Slater 1995:103-220). An

inscription found in the South Theatre at Gerasa refers to an annual festival in honour of Dionysos (Welles 1938:443).[16] Some small theatres in the Near East, such as the theatre at Shuni and the one at Birketein, north of Gerasa, were associated with open-air sanctuaries and were most likely used for the Maioumas festival (Segal 1995:46, 70-71). The theatre at Hammat-Gader has been connected to the rituals taking place in the nearby bath buildings on the basis of epigraphic and historiographic evidence (Segal 1995:18).

The association of the South Theatre and the Sanctuary of Zeus at Gerasa also reflects aspects of Near Eastern, particularly Nabataean, tradition (Segal 1985/88:152). (Schmid 2001:379). The raised temple or high altar in the *temenos* is reminiscent of the Semitic traditions of sacred "high places" and monumental altars. The staircase in the temple is a Near Eastern feature as well (Segal 1988:23). The Qasr el-Bint temple at Petra contained staircases giving access to platforms and the roof (Schmid 2001:379; Ward-Perkins 1983:334), and the Temple of Bel at Palmyra had three such staircases, as mentioned above (Figure 38).[17] The association of Nabataean temples with theatres has been well documented.[18] A theatre, for example, has been uncovered within the "South Temple" at Petra in recent excavations (Figure 49).[19] At the site of Sahir, a small theatre is situated about 15 metres from the Nabataean temple (Figure 50) (Retzleff 2001:7). The large theatre at Petra is located within the necropolis, while the theatre at Elusa is on

[16] Inscription #192 in Welles (1938).
[17] For further examples of staircases within temples in the Near East, see Amy (1950). For a discussion of spiral staircases within Nabataean architecture in general, see Negev (1973).
[18] See Retzleff (2001:7-8).
[19] The excavations at this temple, including the theatre inside the structure, are being undertaken by Brown University under M. S. Joukowsky. For more information on this theatre within the temple, see Joukowsky (1998) and Joukowsky (1999).

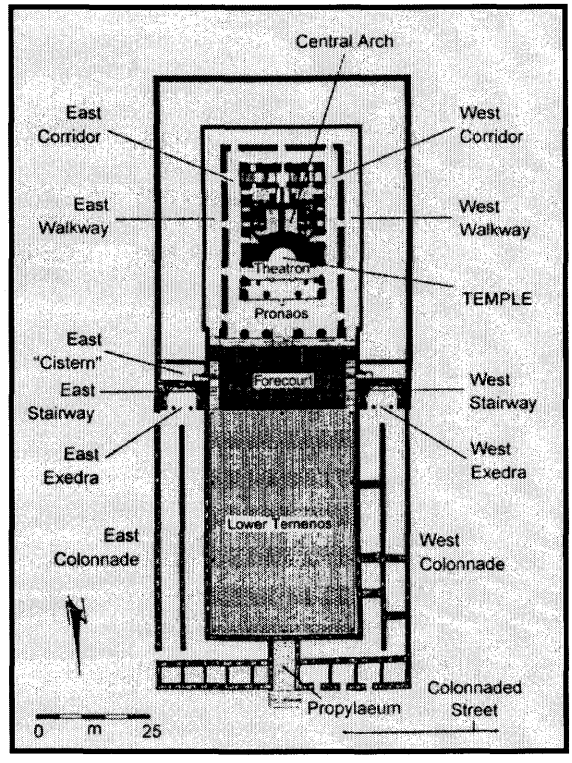

Figure 49: South Temple at Petra with *Theatron* (Schmid 2001:Figure 11.9b).

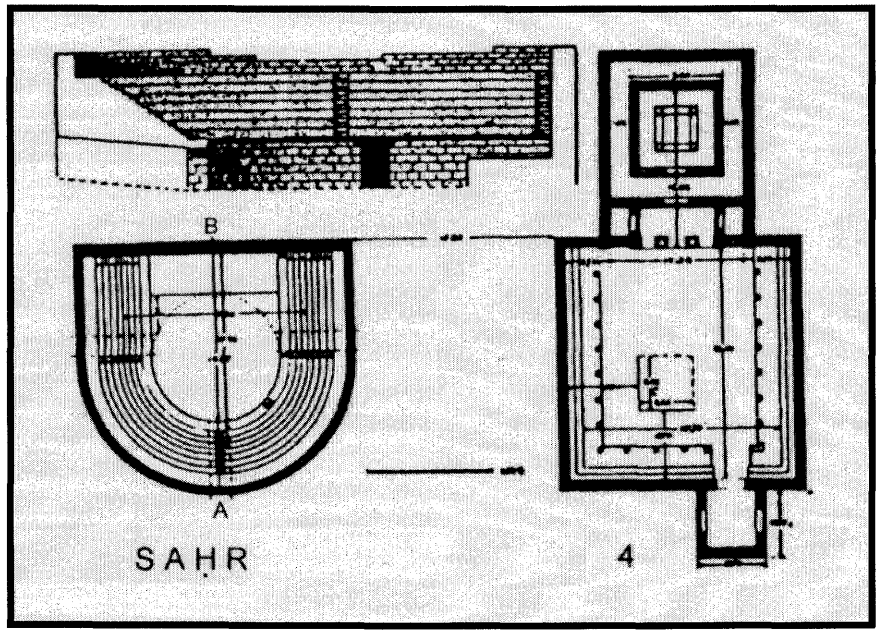

Figure 50: Nabataean Sanctuary with Theatre at Sahir (Schmid 2001:Figure 11.8b).

the edge of the city near its necropolis, which supports their use in funerary rituals. The theatre at Wadi Sabra is part of a Nabataean sanctuary as well (Segal 1995:17-18). This

connection between the theatre and the sanctuary at Gerasa, therefore, could accommodate local tradition, as well as Graeco-Roman religious festivals.

The South Theatre is spatially interrelated with the Oval Plaza also. Although no entrance from the plaza to the theatre area has been uncovered, the curved nature of the oval colonnade would have drawn the eye to the sanctuary and its grand staircase, and from there, one would also have had an awe-inspiring view of the large theatre building. The plaza would also have served as a gathering place for a crowd prior to entering the temple precinct and then the theatre. The presence of the altar in the centre of the plaza suggests that public cult activities occurred here, possibly as part of a religious procession leading to the temple, which could have culminated in theatrical performances in the South Theatre.[20]

5.3.5 Contradistinction and Redundancy

The easy discernment of the various cues identified within the built environment of Gerasa is aided by contradistinction. The theatre was built into a hill with open space immediately around it and the Temple of Zeus just beyond this space, which would make the theatre clearly visible to anyone in the area. Its size and design, as well as the architectural sculpture adorning it, would distinguish the theatre from all other structures. The connection with the Sanctuary of Zeus renders the theatre distinct, with no other public building so associated. To date, no residences or administrative structures have been found in the immediate vicinity of the theatre, and its orientation separates it from the majority of buildings at the site, as it does not align with the general layout of the streets.

[20] See Section 5.5.

As described above, many nonverbal cues can be identified at Gerasa. The South Theatre is clearly public space by virtue of its structural components and spatial positioning, and the spatial patterning and spatial interrelationships with the Sanctuary of Zeus and Oval Plaza embody cues that direct individual and collective responses to the theatre. The message being communicated by the builders and planners of the south area of the city is not difficult to discern, and so, the condition of redundancy is satisfied.

5.4 The Intended Meanings

Having observed and interpreted the cues, I have arrived at several conclusions concerning the meanings intended by the builders of the South Theatre. It is obviously a public structure set apart from the residential areas of the city and related to the Sanctuary of Zeus. The spatial interrelationships between the sanctuary and the theatre are indicated by the fact that there was access from the *temenos* and from the area of the podium on the upper terrace to the theatre. Theatrical performances were part of ritual activities in the Graeco-Roman world,[21] and so ease of access was important. The location of the theatre would have emphasized its sacred associations.

The expense involved in constructing such a building was great, and its presence clearly allowed the city to emphasize its own importance as a thriving Romanized city in the region. Any visiting dignitary, after passing through the South Gate and entering the Oval Plaza, would have a magnificent view of the theatre rising out of the hill beyond the Sanctuary of Zeus, making the theatre one of the first large public buildings encountered within the city walls. Taken together with the Oval Plaza and Sanctuary of Zeus, this cluster of public works would have served to underline the prosperity and

[21] See Section 5.5 and Chapter 2, Section 2.4.

status of Gerasa. From the numerous inscriptions detailing financial matters on behalf of the procurators of the region, it appears that, while Bostra was the new political capital of the province of Arabia, Gerasa was the financial capital (Freeman 2001:434), and this would have made such ostentatious displays of public wealth a vital part of the image of the city. An inscription found in the South Theatre indicates that the city dedicated the *πόδωμα*, which is usually translated as the pavement in the orchestra (Welles 1938:398),[22] and it is likely, therefore, that the city bore much of the expense. The sense of civic pride and patriotism towards one's city could be expressed in the construction of such grand edifices (Schwartz 1998:166; Segal 1995:12).

The benevolence of the wealthy upper class was also advertized by the size, location, and decoration of the theatre, as donations from these individuals did contribute to the building of the South Theatre. One Titus Flavius Dionysios donated 3000 *drachmae* towards the construction of a *cuneus* of seats (Welles 1938:399),[23] while Diogenes son of Emmeganos dedicated a statue of Justice in the theatre on behalf of his son Eumenes (Welles 1938:399).[24] The contributions of such individuals would increase their status within the community, as well as making them known to visitors to the city, who were presented with a clear testament to the benevolence and importance of the donors named in the prominently placed inscriptions.

The cues in the theatre also point to the desire of the upper class to maintain the Hellenized way of life to which they had become accustomed. From the epigraphic evidence, it would appear that the majority of the literate population was Greek-speaking, and even after Gerasa was "freed" by Pompey in 63 BC, the city continued to

[22] Inscription #51 in Welles (1938).
[23] Inscription #52 in Welles (1938).
[24] Inscription #53 in Welles (1938).

favour Greek over all other languages, at least in public documentation. Children were usually given Greek names, and the title bestowed on the city by the Seleucids, "the city of the Antiochenes on the Chrysorrhoas formerly the Gerasenes," was retained during the Roman period (McCown 1936:70-71). This affinity for a Graeco-Roman lifestyle necessitated the inclusion of such a requisite cultural accoutrement as a theatre.

5.5 How was Behaviour Affected?

The interpreted cues and decoded meanings would have affected the behaviour of anyone approaching the theatre or participating in activities within it. As in the case of Caesarea[25], many of the structural components and aspects of the spatial positioning were designed to control and direct the flow of traffic into the theatre. The *vomitoria* directed those entering the *cavea* to the *praecinctio*, from which staircases facilitated access to the seats in either the *summa cavea* or the *ima cavea*. The *aditus maximi* allowed distinguished spectators to enter the orchestra directly from the *temenos* area. These important audience members could sit in the *orchestra*, the *tribunalia*, or on the high-backed seats in the *praecinctio*. The evidence for a wooden railing or screen on top of the *podium* separating the *orchestra* from the *cavea* emphasized the separation between the spectators in these two areas. The perishable nature of this barrier suggests that such distinction was not required at all times. The numbering of the seats aided the theatregoers in finding their appropriate seats. The correctly interpreted cues thus directed the audience to their proper places in the ranked seating arrangement. The various entrances provided a measure of crowd control, easing the congestion and potential problems inherent in organizing the movement of large numbers of people into

[25] See chapter 4, Section 4.5.

and out of such a structure. The possible gathering space behind the *scaena* would have served as an appropriate gathering place for the audience, thereby eliminating the difficulties arising from the uncontrolled and disorganized movements of a large crowd in the area around the theatre. The presence of a portico at the top of the *cavea* would also have served as a place for assembling.

The interrelationships between the Oval Plaza, the *temenos*, the Temple of Zeus, and the South Theatre could represent stages of a religious procession. The altar in the centre of the Oval Plaza is consistent with public cult practices. Hypothetically, a procession route could pass through the Oval Plaza with its altar, up to the *temenos*. One then could proceed to the altar or raised temple in the *temenos* or climb the stairs to the upper terrace and the Temple of Zeus. One could continue on to the theatre by means of the *vomitoria* opening onto the open space between the temple and theatre at the level of the upper terrace, or by means of the *aditus maximi* through the door in the north wall of the *temenos*. Such a sacred procession could culminate in a theatrical performance.

Festivals and ritual celebrations in the Graeco-Roman world often included processions, some of which have been depicted on friezes. The Parthenon frieze illustrates the procession that was part of the Athenian Panathenaia, which honoured Athena (Figure 51). Literary evidence reveals that processions were a component of the worship of Zeus (Csapo and Slater 1995:125).[26] The Dionysia was a festival dedicated

[26] *IG* II^2 380. Source #49C in Csapo and Slater (1995:125).

to Dionysos, which involved two specific processions known as the "Introduction"[27] and the "Procession,"[28] and this festival also included theatrical performances.[29]

Processions were also part of Roman ritual practices. The friezes on the Ara

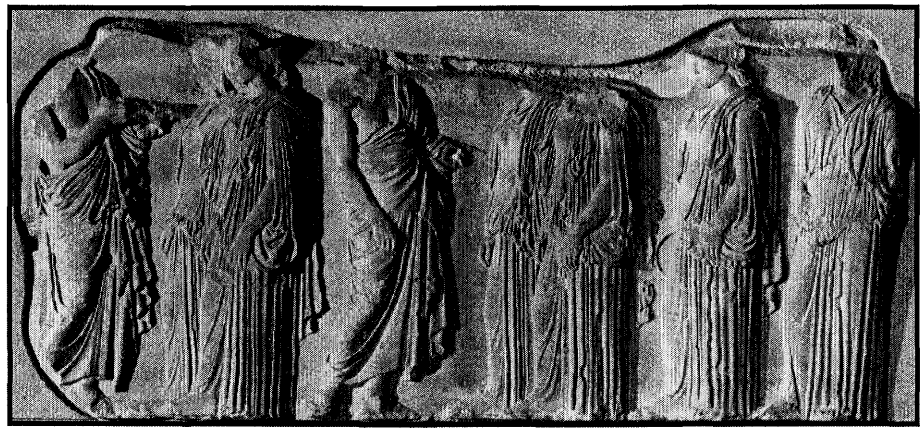

Figure 51: Panathenaic Procession Depicted on the East Frieze of the Parthenon (Pedley 1998:Figure 8.21).

Pacis Augustae in Rome show Augustus, his family, and priests participating in a procession (Figure 52). A relief from the Cancelleria in Rome from the early first

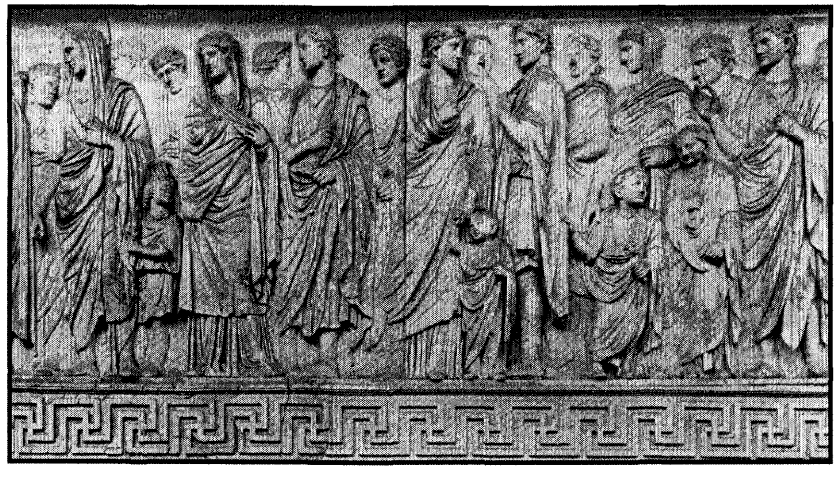

Figure 52: Relief Depicting an Imperial Procession from the Ara Pacis Augustae (Ramage and Ramage 1996:Figure 3.26).

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[27] *IG* II^2 10006.12-13. Source #11 in Csapo and Slater (1995:111).
[28] Aristotle, *Constitution of the Athenians* 56.4. Source #17 in Csapo and Slater (1995:113).
[29] Law of Euegoros in Demosthenes, *Against Meidias* 10. Source #15 in Csapo and Slater (1995:112).

century AD illustrates a sacrificial procession of the *vicomagistri*, who guard the household gods (Figure 53). The Arch of Titus in Rome depicts triumphal processions,

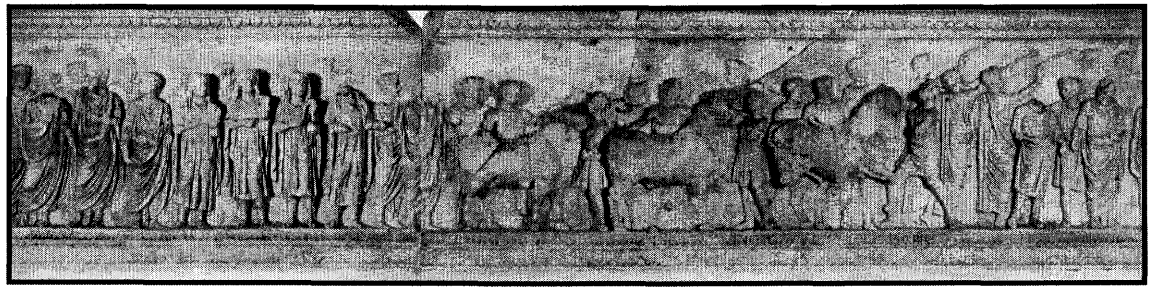

Figure 53: Relief Showing a Procession of the *Vicomagistri* from the Cancelleria (Ramage and Ramage 1996:Figure 4.16).

while the Arch of Trajan in Benevento shows an imperial procession (Figure 54). The

Figure 54: Imperial Procession Depicted on the Arch of Trajan at Benevento (Ramage and Ramage 1996:Figure 6.23).

Arch of Marcus Aurelius, now in the Capitoline Museum, also depicts a ritual procession. The worship of various gods, such as Apollo, Ceres, Flora, and Cybele, in the Roman world also included theatrical performances (Csapo and Slater 1995:208), and there is literary evidence to support the inclusion of theatrical activities in the

worship of Zeus, as part of the Capitolia instituted by Domitian in AD 86 (Csapo and Slater 1995:206).[30]

As mentioned in the previous section, the view of the theatre, as seen from the Oval Plaza by the local populace and visitors, certainly would have affected their perception of it. Its elevated position, size, and proximity to the Sanctuary of Zeus inspired awe and the appropriate decorum when people approached the theatre in its ritual capacity. The civic pride of the citizens of Gerasa was expressed through this building, and visitors were reminded of the importance and wealth of the city, its officials, and its prominent citizens, which would affect their responses to the theatre and the activities occurring within it.

Epigraphic evidence from the theatre indicates that it was a place where local individuals were honoured by the placement of a statue. A round pedestal was found at the west end of the *pulpitum*, which honours Titus Flavius Quirina Gerrenus, son of Flavius Flacus, who served as the first *agonothetes* of an annual festival "of the sacred guild of the ecumenical, victorious, crowned artists in the service of Dionysus and of our Lord Imperator Nerva Traianus Caesar Augustus Germanicus Dacicus" (Welles 1938:443).[31] This inscription also provides evidence that the dramatic components of at least one festival were held in this theatre.

The existence of such a large structure designed for the assembly of large crowds would have influenced the behaviour of individuals when public meetings were required. The theatre could have functioned at times as a gathering place to hear speeches or view visiting dignitaries, such as when Emperor Hadrian visited the city.

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[30] Suetonius, *Domitian* 4.8-10. Source #173 in Csapo and Slater (1995:206).
[31] Inscription #192 in Welles (1938).

The fact that a Roman emperor was viewed as a god, often associated with Zeus/Jupiter, would have rendered such a use of the theatre most appropriate in that context. The close physical connection of the South Theatre to the Sanctuary of Zeus supports its use in religious activities at Gerasa.

CHAPTER 6

SCYTHOPOLIS

The Roman city of Scythopolis is located at the base of the massive ancient tell of Beth Shean in the river valley of Nahal Harod (Figure 1). The large theatre was excavated over a period of several years, beginning in 1961-1962 under the direction of S. Applebaum and continuing in 1962 under A. Negev, on behalf of the National Parks Authority (Applebaum 1978:77). In 1980-1981, G. Foerster and Y. Tsafrir conducted further work here on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Excavations in the city centre have continued since 1986 under Foerster and Tsafrir, as well as under G. Mazor, on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (Foerster 1993:223; Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:7).

The seven elements required for the facilitation of the nonverbal communication process are apparent at Scythopolis. The senders are the city officials and the wealthy benefactors who were responsible for the construction, placement, and funding of the theatre. The receivers are the local inhabitants of Scythopolis, an admixture of Greek, Roman, and local Semitic peoples. The channel is the built environment, specifically the city centre. The messages, intended meanings, and behavioural effects will all be discussed in Sections 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5 below. The context is the second and early third centuries AD in the Near East, namely the period in which most of the structures in the city centre were erected, including the theatre.

6.1 The Senders, Receivers, and Context

The Ptolemies founded the city of Scythopolis in the third century BC, following the activities of Alexander the Great in the region (Josephus *JA* 12.4.5). The Hellenistic city was situated on nearby Tell Iztabba, unlike that of the Roman period. Macedonian settlers and army veterans formed the majority of the population, along with local Semites. The Greek character of the city was carried over through the succeeding centuries, as exemplified by an inscription of the second century AD, which identified Scythopolis as a Greek city of Coele Syria (Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:118,121), and the persistence of the ancient tradition that Dionysos founded the city after burying his nurse, Nysa, there (Foerster and Tsafrir 1987/88:27).

When Pompey carried out his campaign in the region in 63 BC, this was one of the cities he "freed" and added to the province of Syria (Josephus *JA* 14.3.4). Scythopolis became the largest city of the Decapolis (Josephus *JW* 3.9.7), and it appears that it reached a peak in development in the mid-second century AD, during the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius (Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:119). By this time, Scythopolis had been transferred to the province of Judaea (Millar 1993:96). The overall plan of the city was laid out in the mid-second century AD (Foerster 1993:223), and many of the structures in the city centre were erected at this time, including the East Bathhouse and the *nymphaeum*. The Roman theatre building is dated to the early Severan period in the latter part of the second century or early third century AD (Segal 1995:59).

6.2 The Channel

The built environment of Scythopolis has the potential to have communicated nonverbally with the populace of the city, as did the built environments of Caesarea and Gerasa. The large theatre is situated in the city centre, and in its vicinity are various structures, which can contribute to the interpretation of the function of this theatre (Figure 55).[1] These structures include a sacred enclosure [22], a temple [5], a bath

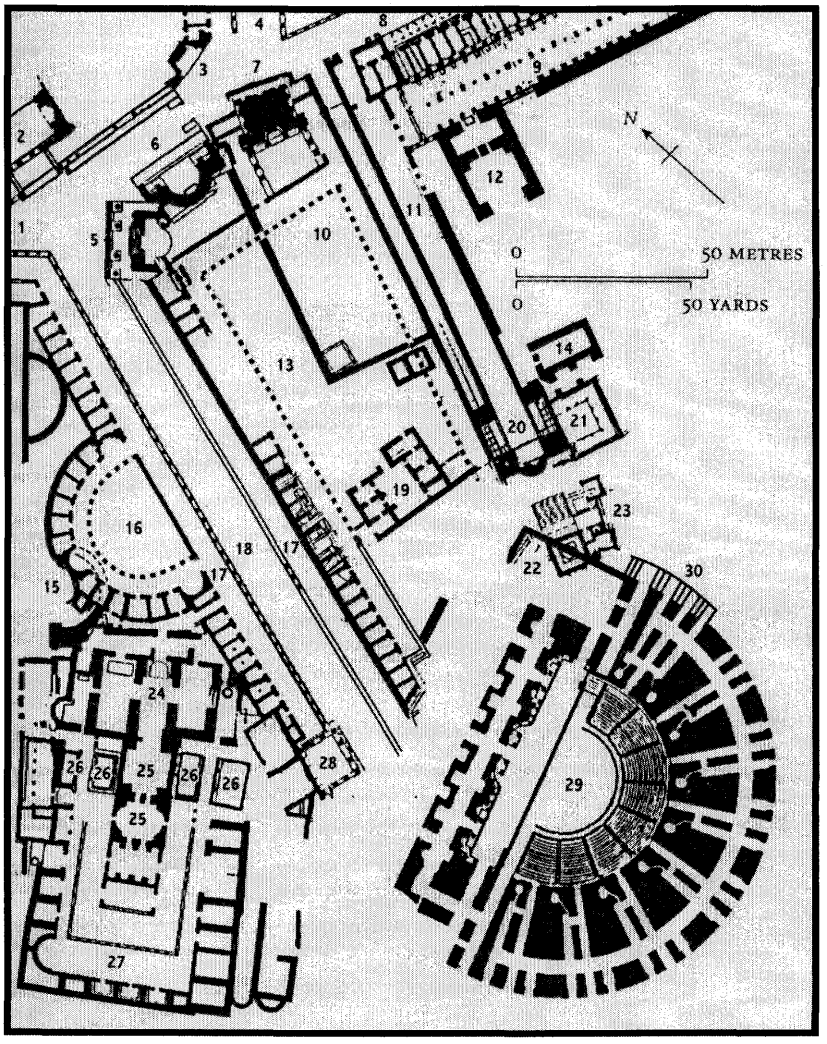

Figure 55: Plan of the Roman and Byzantine City Centre of Scythopolis (Murphy-O'Connor 1998:Figure 52).

[1] Numbers given in square brackets on the following pages refer to structures depicted on this plan.

building [12, 14], shops, a small theatre (called an *odeion* by the excavators) [15], a *nymphaeum* [6], a basilica [10], a monument [7], and a colonnade [9] with a reflecting pool. These structures will be discussed in detail in Section 6.3.3.

6.3 The Message (i.e. the Cues)

The built environment of the city centre of Scythopolis contains many cues. The structural components of the large theatre, its spatial positioning within the urban landscape, the spatial patterning of other structures in the area, and the spatial interrelationships between the theatre and these structures all quite effectively communicate messages that would have influenced the behaviour of the populace and the ways in which they perceived the theatre.

6.3.1 Structural Components

The *cavea* of the large theatre at Scythopolis was 110 metres in diameter (Figure 56) (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1999). It was built of basalt and *opus*

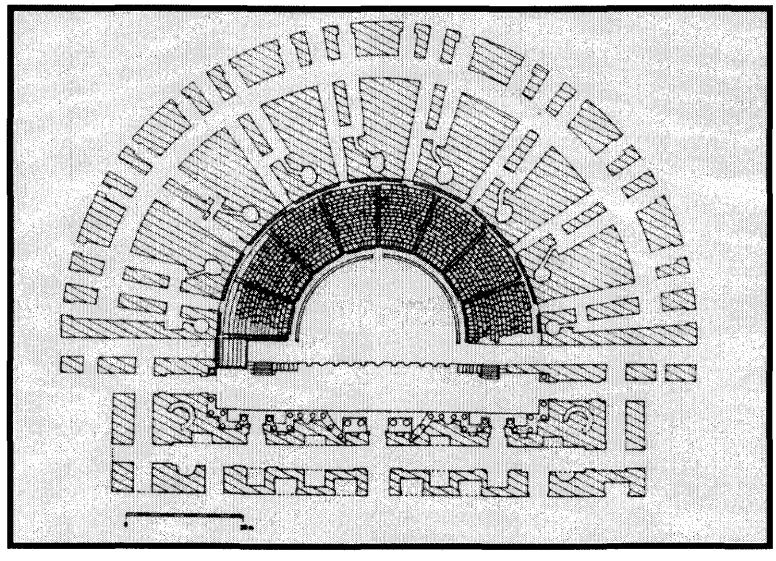

Figure 56: Large Theatre at Scythopolis (Segal 1995:Figure 55).

caementicium, although all those parts that would be visible to those seated in the theatre (i.e. the seats, the *orchestra*, the *scaenae frons*, and the *tribunalia*) were of limestone. This theatre was constructed in the same manner as the theatres at Caesarea and Gerasa discussed above. The *ima cavea* was set into a chalk escarpment (Figure 57), while the *summa cavea* rested on an artificial substructure consisting of arched passageways.[2]

Figure 57: Large Theatre at Scythopolis (Segal 1995:Figure 49).

There were thirteen rows of seats divided into eight *cunei* in the *ima cavea*, but it is not possible to determine how many rows of seats existed in the upper tier (Applebaum 1978:78-79; Foerster 1993:226; Segal 1995:56-59). According to one estimate, the theatre could have held approximately 8000 spectators (Applebaum 1978:78).

The two tiers of the *cavea* were separated by a *praecinctio*, to which eight pairs of *vomitoria* gave access from the outside. Each pair of vaulted *vomitoria* were joined together by a short connecting passage halfway between the outside and the *praecinctio*,

[2] Segal (1995:56 note 77) discusses the possibility that the *summa cavea* is actually a *media cavea*, and if so, there would have been another horizontal section above it. Because of the poor state of preservation of this upper section, it is not possible to verify or refute this suggestion.

and only the eastern one gave access to the *cavea* (Segal 1995:57). The western passage ended in an oval chamber, and there is evidence to support the reconstruction of a domed ceiling (Figure 58). There are nine of these oval chambers, and while their function is unclear, it seems likely that they were meant to be resonating chambers in spite of having little acoustic effect (Ovadiah and de Silva 1981/82:85-92).[3]

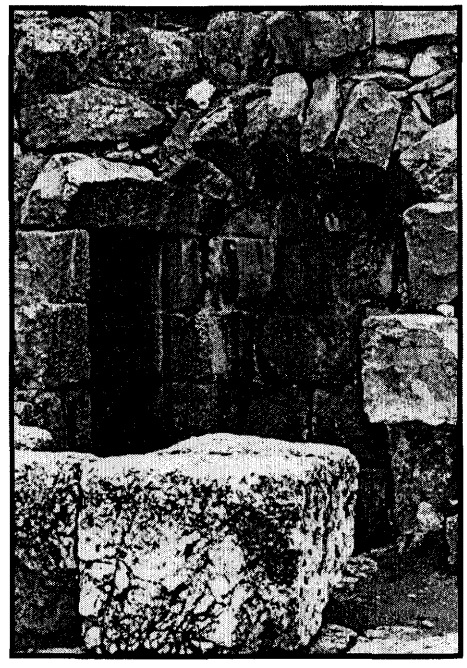

Figure 58: Oval Chamber in the Large Theatre (Ovadiah and De Silva 1981/82:97).

This interpretation is based on Vitruvius' discussion of the proper placement of *echea*, or bronze sounding vessels, in the theatre. He describes the construction of chambers designed to house the *echea* (Vitruvius *On Archit.* 5.5), and this description seems to apply to the oval chambers in the large theatre at Scythopolis.

Immediately behind the rear wall of the *cavea* to the south, there stood an external peripheral wall (Figure 59). Four staircases, supported by a fill of dirt and

[3] Ovadiah and de Silva (1981/82:85-92) detail a number of possible suggestions for the function of these chambers, but they ultimately conclude that they served an acoustic purpose.

stones, were built into this structure, and between every two staircases, three entrances were found. Two of these were situated opposite the *vomitoria* entrances, with the third entrance opening onto the back wall of the *cavea*. It is unclear if this wall was planned as part of the initial building of the theatre (Ovadiah and de Silva 1981/82:92-94), although there is ceramic and numismatic evidence to support a contemporaneous date (Applebaum 1978:88).[4]

Figure 59: External Peripheral Wall of the Large Theatre (Ovadiah and De Silva 1981/82:97).

Access to the *orchestra* was gained through the barrel-vaulted *aditus maximi*, and *tribunalia* sat over these entrances (Figure 60) (Segal 1995: 58). The *orchestra* is 21 metres in diameter (Retzleff 2001:335 Chart 1), but it does not conform to the typical semicircular shape. On either side, it extends beyond the semicircle. A freestanding parapet, measuring 1.05 metres in height, separates the *orchestra* from the *ima cavea* (Retzleff 2001:335 Chart 1), and behind this parapet was a walkway, or *balteus* (Figure

[4] The possible function of this wall will be discussed in Section 6.6.

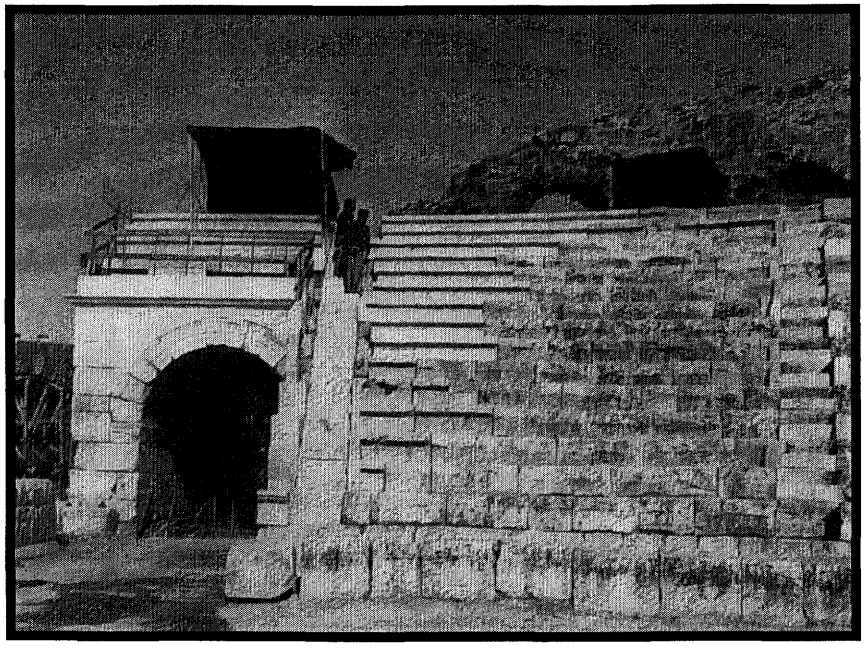

Figure 60: *Aditus Maximus* and *Tribunal* on the East Side of the Large Theatre (Bar-Nathan and Mazor 1992:Figure 49).

61) (Applebaum 1978:80). A similar parapet is seen in the theatre at Adraa (Retzleff 2001:258). As in the case of the *podium* at Gerasa, a series of regularly spaced cuttings,

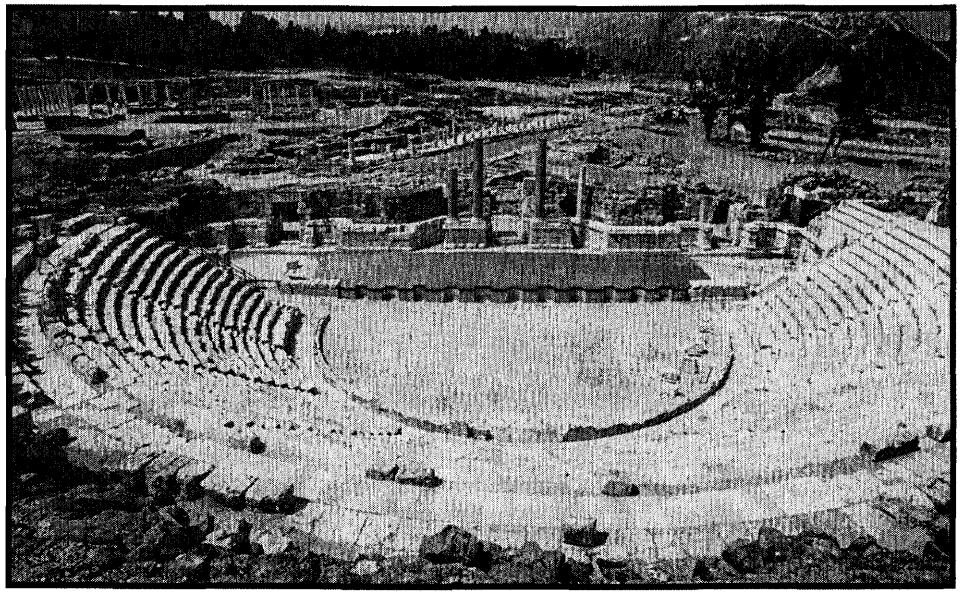

Figure 61: Large Theatre at Scythopolis; note the parapet and *balteus* separating the *cavea* and the *orchestra* (Bar-Nathan and Mazor 1992:Figure 48).

measuring 24 by 29 metres, were sunk into the top of the parapet at a depth of 20 centimetres. These cuttings had stone covers, one of which was found during the excavations, and they probably supported a wooden railing. The parapet, the base of which was situated on a lower level than the *balteus*, served as a marble bench extending around the *orchestra*, and this bench likely provided seating for distinguished spectators (Applebaum 1978:80; Retzleff 2001:113; Segal 1995:57).

Columns and niches embellished the *scaenae frons*, and these decorative elements were made of marble and granite, which had been imported from Greece, Asia Minor, North Africa, and Egypt (Foerster 1993:226). It had the typical three entrances, although the *hospitalia* were not visible from most of the seats.[5] At either end of the *scaena* behind the *scaenae frons* were spiral staircases leading to the roof of the stage building, and from there one could enter the *summa cavea*. There may have been a gathering space behind the *scaena* (Segal 1995:58-59). This area will be discussed in Section 6.3.2.

6.3.2 Spatial Positioning

The spatial positioning of the large theatre at Scythopolis [29] is imbued with nonverbal cues. The theatre was constructed on a steep hill sloping down towards the north (Segal 1995:56), and this orientation would have insured that, as at Gerasa, the audience would not have the sun directly in their eyes. It was situated in the civic centre

[5] This may be the result of a scaling down of the overall design of the theatre due to the expense involved in its construction, or it simply may reflect the maintenance of the traditional plan of the *scaenae frons* in a time when the activities occurring in the theatre did not require these side entrances (Applebaum 1978:78-79; Segal 1995:58-59 note 86).

of the Roman city, incorporated into the planned layout of the area. Such a location is comparable to the positioning of the theatres in Philadelphia (Figure 62).[6] As

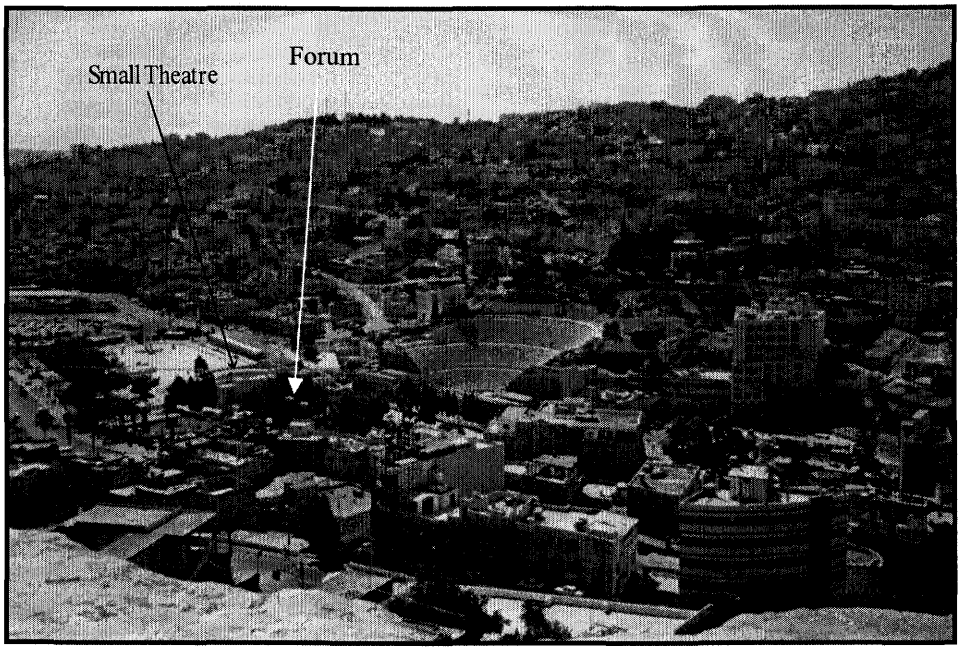

Figure 62: View of the City Centre of Philadelphia with the Large and Small Theatres looking Southeast (Photograph Origin Unknown).

Scythopolis is situated in a river valley with numerous hills in the area, it is unlikely that the topography was the sole deciding factor in the placement of this theatre. The construction method employed would have enabled the builders to erect the theatre elsewhere, as they had the ability to construct an artificial substructure that supported one, or possibly even two, tiers of seats above the *ima cavea*.

It was also integrated into the overall street plan of Scythopolis. Owing to the topography of the site, which consisted of hills, riverbeds, and the ancient tell of Beth Shean, it was not possible for the streets to follow a strict orthogonal plan, although the city planners attempted to approximate such a grid wherever possible. The area slopes downward from the theatre hill in the direction of the temple [5]. A major colonnaded

[6] See p. 23.

street, called Palladius Street [18], extends from the area of the temple towards the theatre. It is 180 metres long, with a width of 7.2 to 7.5 metres (Figure 63). On the west

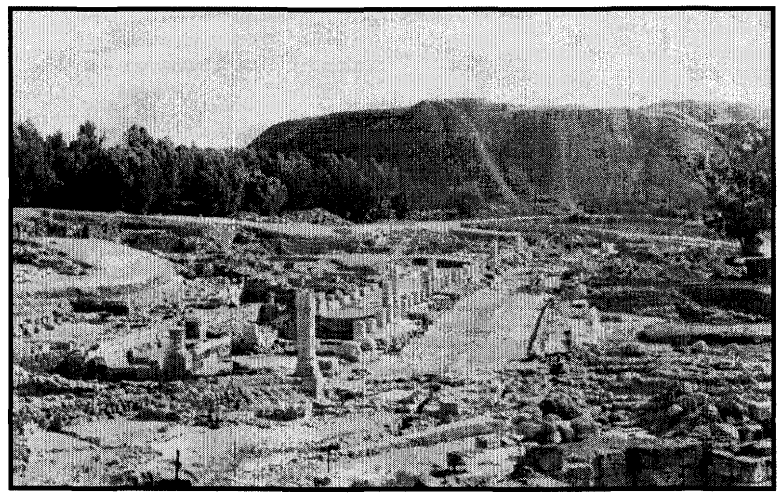

Figure 63: View of Palladius Street from the South End (Segal 1997:Figure 29).

side, columns supported the roof of a portico incorporating a sidewalk [17], approximately 7.1 metres wide, and a row of shops, with a width of 7.2 metres (Foerster 1993:223-225). The present remains of the street are from the fourth century AD, but recent excavations have revealed the presence of a similarly aligned colonnaded street from the second or early third century AD. On the east side of this street was a portico, about 6.5 metres wide, and east of the portico was a row of shops, which date to the second century AD. The back wall of these shops formed the rear wall of the portico. They were constructed on a lower level than the street, and there was likely a second story of shops opening onto the street. The lower shops opened to the east (Bar-Nathan and Mazor 1992:45; Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:15-16).

A street or paved plaza has also been uncovered, which extended eastwards along the exterior façade of the theatre. Two phases have been distinguished thus far, dating to the late fourth and early six centuries AD (Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:20), and it is possible that there was an earlier phase. On the north side of this street/plaza

running along the theatre façade was a portico facing the city centre (Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:20). If there was an earlier phase of the street, then the portico and the street/plaza could have served as general gathering space for the late second or early third century AD building of the theatre. If the street/plaza was not in existence at the time of the theatre's construction, the area later used for the street/plaza could have functioned as informal gathering space. In the fourth century AD, part of the nearby sacred enclosure, beneath a Byzantine fountain house [23] in Figure 55, was covered over by a paved "theatre square" that was related to a Byzantine period flight of stairs along the northeast side of the theatre, which led to the eastern *aditus maximus* and *vomitoria* (Bar-Nathan and Mazor 1992:35; Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:11).

6.3.3 Spatial Patterning

Among the various structures in the vicinity of the large theatre was the sacred enclosure. Located immediately to the northeast of the theatre, its initial construction dates to the first century AD. Various changes and repairs were conducted in the second and third centuries AD. The central building of the enclosure [22] was found abutting the northeast corner of the theatre, and it seems to have been a particularly important structure because the builders were careful not to damage it when constructing a new theatre façade and a complex in its northeast corner in a later phase. This structure was set on a square podium, measuring 8 x 8 metres, with a flight of stairs on the northeast side ascending from a paved square to the top of the podium. The central building was square on the outside, but the interior was round, having a diameter of 3.4 metres. The remains of an altar were found inside. A flight of stairs led up from the southeast end of the paved square to the rest of the enclosure, where there was also a *nymphaeum*, a

series of pools, altars, and various other installations. In the second or third century AD, a basalt wall was constructed to enclose this entire area. This part of the sacred enclosure was later covered by the "theatre square" and then a Byzantine fountain house [23]. (Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:8-11).[7]

The Roman temple [5] located at the junction of Palladius Street and the northwest-southeast street [1] likely dates to the second century AD. It is oriented to the northwest, with a paved plaza in front of it. A statue pedestal found in this plaza carried an inscription dedicating the statue to Emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180) on behalf of the city, identifying it as Nysa-Scythopolis, one of the Greek cities of Coele Syria. A staircase measuring 20.5 metres in width gave access to the columned portico on the front of the temple, which had four huge columns. Another flight of stairs led to the temple itself, and its façade measured 20.5 metres. The *naos* was round, with a diameter of 8.5 metres (Foerster 1993:227; Foerster and Tsafrir 1987/88:26-27; Foerster and Tsafrir 1988/89:18-19; Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:120).

Scholars have suggested that this temple was dedicated to Dionysos or to his nurse, Nysa. Ancient tradition states that Dionysos buried her here and then founded the city in her honour. This association is supported by the presence of a hexagonal altar (Figure 64), which is likely not *in situ*, found in the nearby basilica [10]. Dionysiac reliefs decorated all sides of the altar, including masks of Dionysos and crossed *thyrsoi*. Some of the reliefs also depict Pan and his accoutrements. An inscription, dated to AD 141/142, was found on one side of the altar dedicating the altar to the god and *kyrios* Dionysos, as the founder of the city, on behalf of Seleukos, son of Ariston (Foerster

[7] A more detailed description of the various components of the sacred enclosure can be found in Mazor and Bar-Nathan (1998:8-11).

Figure 64: Hexagonal Altar with Dionysiac Reliefs (Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:Figure 9).

1993:229; Foerster and Tsafrir 1987/88:31; Foerster and Tsafrir 1992b:8). The inscription found on the pedestal in the plaza suggests an association between this temple and the Imperial cult. A monumental *propylaeum* [2] has been discovered north of the plaza in front of the temple, and this gateway appears to lead to a flight of stairs rising up the tell to the temple of Zeus Akraios (Foerster and Tsafrir 1988/89:19; Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:120; Foerster and Tsafrir 1992b:8).

A bathhouse, called the East Bathhouse [12, 14], covered the area to the northeast of the theatre and the sacred enclosure, up to a colonnade [9], which was later covered by shops bordering the east-west Byzantine street [8]. The bathhouse was originally constructed in the second century AD, but it was also reused and remodelled in the Byzantine period (Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:11-13). Northeast of the bathhouse was the colonnade [9] (Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:12), with a reflecting pool on its north side, which served to reflect the columns, beautifying the area. The

colonnade and pool originally functioned as part of the bathhouse. A statue of Dionysos was discovered among the columns (Figure 65), and another statue, that of an armour-clad ruler, was uncovered to the south. These statues may have graced the colonnade or could be associated with the bathhouse (Foerster 1993:229-230; Foerster and Tsafrir 1987/88:32-33; Foerster and Tsafrir 1992b:25-26).

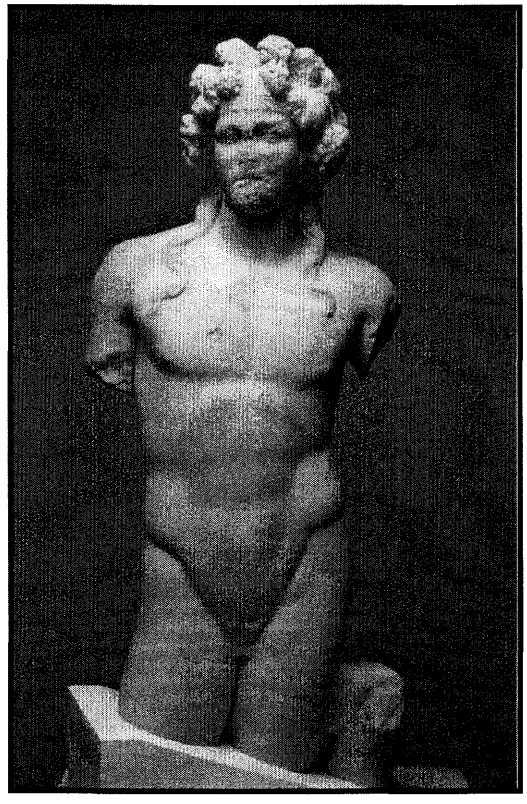

Figure 65: Statue of Dionysos from the Colonnade (*Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 11:Back Cover Photograph).

A basilica [10] stood to the west of the colonnade with the pool. Its initial construction dates to the first century AD. An apse stood at the northeast end of the building, though this end of the basilica, including the apse, was later integrated into a monument erected in the second century AD (Foerster 1993:229; Foerster and Tsafrir 1987/88:31; Foerster and Tsafrir 1988/89:20; Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:119). This monument [7], sometimes referred to as the central or columnar monument, was situated

on a raised platform, with a flight of stairs leading up from the street. Among the architectural elements found in the debris was a marble pedestal with a mask of Dionysos carved on it. Other reliefs depicted nereids and cupids (Foerster 1993:228-229; Foerster and Tsafrir 1987/88:30; Foerster and Tsafrir 1988/89:20; Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:119). West of the monument and basilica lay a *nymphaeum* [6], dated to the second century AD by its decorative elements. A fourth century AD inscription identifying Flavius Artemidorus, the archon at the time, as responsible for the structure probably refers to its rebuilding (Foerster 1993:227-228; Foerster and Tsafrir 1987/88:27-28; Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:120).

On the west side of Palladius Street, the excavators uncovered a small *odeion* [15]. They place the date of its construction in the second half of the second century AD (Bar-Nathan and Mazor 1992:45), although their reasons for this are unclear (Retzleff 2001:81). It was largely destroyed by the construction of the Byzantine West Bathhouse [24-27]. The *odeion* could have served as a *bouleuterion*, and it seems to have been connected with a large structure buried beneath the West Bathhouse and a later *exedra*, called the *sigma* [16]. Evidence for an earlier Roman bathhouse beneath the Byzantine one is unclear (Foerster 1993:227; Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:120; Mazor 1987/88:18-19; Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:15, 23).

6.3.4 Spatial Interrelationships

The spatial interrelationships between the large theatre at Scythopolis and the various structures described above are significant. The street layout clearly defines and delineates a core city centre, of which the theatre was an integral part. The theatre's function as a public entertainment building is reinforced by its surroundings. All of the

structures in this area were public in nature. The theatre is in fairly close proximity to the East Bathhouse and the colonnade with the reflecting pool. These structures were designed for the enjoyment and entertainment of the local populace, as was the nearby *nymphaeum*. The *odeion* also may have served as an entertainment structure for events that did not require a large facility. The presence of shops in the area reaffirms the overall public nature of the district.

The spatial interrelationships between the theatre and the various religious structures in the area also attest to the theatre's use for performances associated with sacred activities. The theatre is in close association with the sacred enclosure, which dates to the first century AD. During reconstruction and conservation of the theatre, parts of several walls were found, which support the presence of an earlier theatre, also from the first century AD, on the site of the Severan building (Bar-Nathan and Mazor 1992:33-34; Foerster 1993:226; Retzleff 2001:74). This indicates that the close physical association between the sacred enclosure and the theatre was conceived of as part of their initial construction. Although, the nature of the rituals performed in the sacred enclosure and the deity or deities worshipped there are not documented, it seems reasonable to suggest that theatrical performances were involved. The façade of the *nymphaeum* in the sacred enclosure had four fountain mouths designed as the heads of lions and lionesses (Figure 66) (Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:10), and Dionysos' association with such felines is well known. For example, a sarcophagus currently in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York depicts Dionysos riding a feline that appears to have a mane (Figure 67). The carved fountain mouths could support an association between Dionysos and the sacred enclosure, although the lion's head is a fairly standard

Figure 66: Fountain Mouth Shaped Like a Lion's Head (Mazor and Bar-Nathan 1998:Figure 7).

Figure 67: Relief on a Sarcophagus Depicting Dionysos Riding a Feline (Kleiner 1992:Figure 362).

design for fountain mouths. The careful preservation of the central building of this enclosure when the new theatre façade was built implies that the ritual activities taking

place within this building were still considered important in the third century and even into the fourth century AD.

The theatre is also spatially interrelated with the Roman temple at the north end of Palladius Street (Figure 55). The temple faces the open plaza at the junction of this street and the northwest-southeast street, which would allow for the gathering of crowds taking part in ritual processions. Two cavities designed to hold hexagonal altars located in this plaza (Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:120) indicate that certain ritual activities were undertaken in this open space. From this area, the crowd could proceed down the wide colonnaded street, a street ideally suited for processions, to the theatre. The street/plaza with a portico joining the south end of Palladius Street would provide gathering space for the masses prior to, between, and after the theatrical rituals took place. Similar processions could also have begun in the area of the Temple of Zeus Akraios on the tell, continuing down the steps and through the *propylaeum*, opening onto the plaza before the Roman temple. This *propylaeum* is directly aligned with Palladius Street, and presumably with its second century AD predecessor, allowing for a clear view of at least part of the theatre at the end of the street. From the tell, the theatre would have been visible in its entirety (Figure 68). The state of the preservation of the *propylaeum* threshold indicates that this gateway was not utilized frequently, which supports the assertion that it was used solely for sacred festivals and processions (Foerster and Tsafrir 1992b:9).

Such religious connections with the theatre are supported by epigraphic evidence, as well as decorative elements. There are several references to Dionysos. The statue of Dionysos found in the colonnade, the altar dedicated to Dionysos as the city

founder in the basilica, and the many reliefs related to Dionysos, which are associated with the monument, all point to the importance of this deity in ancient Scythopolis.

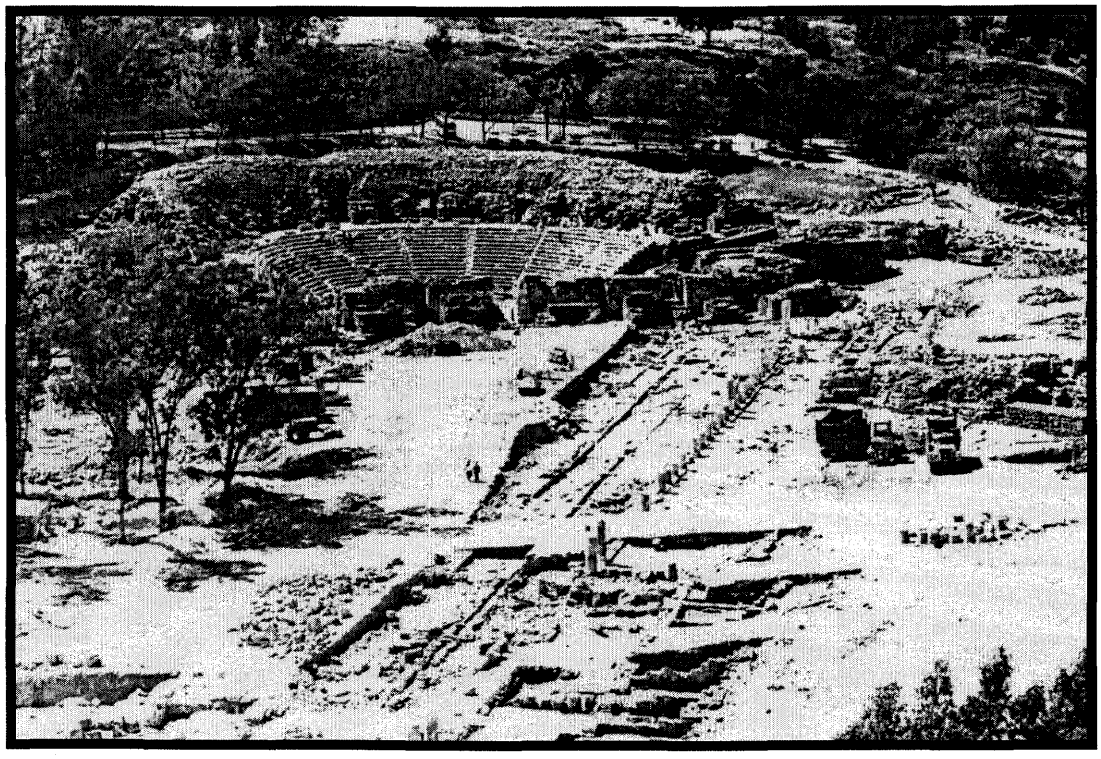

Figure 68: View of the Large Theatre and the South End of Palladius Street from the North (Segal 1995:Figure 53).

Thus, it seems fitting for a theatre to be found in close proximity to ritual structures, as Dionysos was the patron deity of drama in the Graeco-Roman world. This association is strengthened by the discovery of an inscription on an altar found in the theatre during excavations. It reads: "To the god Dionysus, Germanus (dedicated)" (Ovadiah and de Silva 1981/82:94). A Corinthian capital decorated with a mask of Dionysos, which was later reused in a Byzantine structure, was likely from the theatre (Figure 69) (Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:122). There would have been religious festivals and performances held in the theatre in honour of the "founder" of the city.

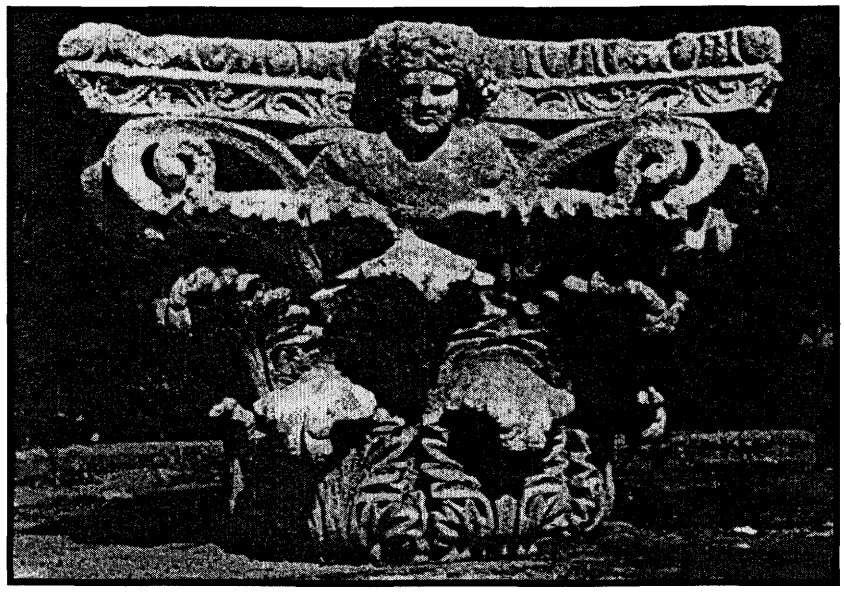

Figure 69: Corinthian Capital with a Mask of Dionysos (Foerster and Tsafrir 1992a:Figure 11).

6.3.5 Contradistinction and Redundancy

Contradistinction is apparent among the cues within the built environment of Scythopolis. The design and elaborate decoration of the theatre is unique, and its orientation does set it apart somewhat from the nearby buildings. It faces north, which gives it a different alignment from the surrounding structures. Its position at the end of the street also separates it and makes at least the western end of the structure clearly visible to anyone in the area. There are no residences in the vicinity, emphasizing the distinctness of this building and the other public structures in the city centre.

The presence of several nonverbal cues has been established in this context. The association of the theatre with numerous other public structures and the time and expense involved in the construction of the theatre building all enhance the interpretation of this edifice. Its spatial positioning and its spatial interrelationships with

the neighbouring structures also emphasize its nature and function. These factors all contribute to the fulfillment of the condition of redundancy.

6.4 The Intended Meanings

As in the cases of Caesarea and Gerasa, the observation and interpretation of the cues reveals the intended meanings being expressed nonverbally through the built environment. The builders of the large theatre at Scythopolis emphasized the importance of this public structure by locating it in the city centre. The spatial interrelationships discussed in Section 6.3.4 indicate that dramatic performances associated with religious festivals were held in the theatre.

The city was projecting its importance and status in the province by constructing this expensive and elaborate building. The fact that the builders did not fashion the interior of the theatre from the dark local basalt of the exterior, but rather used light limestone, is significant. The limestone created a bright, striking appearance and contributed to the overall grandeur of the edifice, as well as preventing heat exhaustion. Black basalt would absorb and radiate heat, making conditions inside the theatre unbearable on warm days. The decorative elements made of imported marble and granite were expensive (Figure 70). An element of civic pride is evident here, as it was at Gerasa. The wealthy benefactors who contributed to the construction of the theatre, as well as the city in general, were able to flaunt their prosperity (Segal 1985/88:157). The positioning of the theatre enhanced the overall impression of the structure. If one entered the city centre from the north, the theatre was visible immediately as a massive, grandiose structure rising out of the hillside at the end of Palladius Street.

It is plausible that the theatre was intended to convey another meaning. As the Greek inscriptions and the decoration of the structures indicate, this city was proud of its

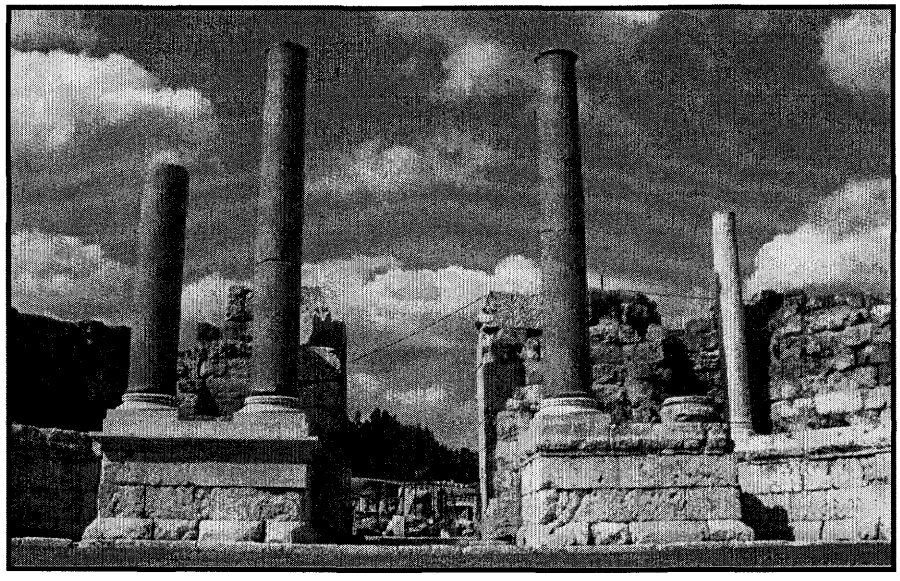

Figure 70: Columns of the *Scaenae Frons* in the Large Theatre (*Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 11:Plate D).

Hellenistic origins. The presence of the theatre would be a factor in maintaining Greek culture in the area, as such a structure was an important part of any Hellenistic city. The inscription on the statue pedestal found near the Roman temple supports this assertion. Its "emphasis on Scythopolis being 'one of Coele Syria's Greek cities' may have been due to the concern that non-Greek elements in the population would try to undermine Scythopolis' status as a Greek city from its foundation" (Foerster and Tsafrir 1988/89:19), or that the Greek culture would be absorbed into that of the local indigenous population.

6.5 How was Behaviour Affected?

The reception and interpretation of the cues by anyone approaching the theatre or observing the performances within it certainly would have affected their behaviour. The

means of accessing the theatre were clearly designed to control and direct traffic entering and exiting the building. The pairs of *vomitoria* gave access to the *cavea*, and the external peripheral wall originally may have been intended to aid in maintaining orderly movement of the large crowds. The entrances, which correspond to the *vomitoria*, allowed traffic to flow with greater ease, in conjunction with the staircases. If Segal's suggestion (1995:56 note 77) is correct, and the remaining levels of the *cavea* represent the *ima* and *media cavea* with a no longer extant *summa cavea* above them, this external peripheral wall supported the *summa cavea*, and the staircases led to some form of access to the *praecinctio* between the *media* and *summa cavea*. If the external wall was not intended to support an upper tier of seats, but rather was intended solely to contribute to the control of the crowds entering and exiting the existing *vomitoria*, it was probably never fully operational in this respect. The distance between the wall and the hillside was a mere 1-2 metres, which would have been an inadequate space to accommodate the large crowds entering and exiting the theatre. It is possible that the builders adapted the plan of the theatre and the wall while construction was underway, and the work on this elaborate system of entrances to the *cavea* was halted (Applebaum 1978:87; Ovadiah and de Silva 1981/82:93).

The spiral staircases in either end of the *scaena* gave access to the *summa cavea*, as well as to the roof of the scene building for the performers. The *aditus maximi* allowed distinguished visitors to enter the theatre at the level of the *orchestra*, and they could take their seats on the stone bench of the parapet, or they could climb one of the staircases in the *cavea* to reach the *tribunalia*. The presence or absence of the moveable wooden barrier separating the *cavea* from the *orchestra* indicated the degree of separation required between the distinguished spectators and the general populace

during a particular performance or ritual. Traffic would be directed to the theatre along Palladius Street. This street allowed for the movement of individuals and groups back and forth between the theatre and the temple during festivals. The presence of a gathering space behind the *scaena* building provided an appropriate place for the crowds of theatregoers to congregate.

The view of the theatre at the end of Palladius Street would inspire awe in visitors and generate a sense of civic pride in the citizens of Scythopolis. The provision of such a large, expensive entertainment building for the enjoyment of the local populace would have resulted in a more favourable view of the city officials and benefactors who contributed to the construction of the theatre. The time and expense required to construct and maintain such a building, as well as the efforts made to beautify it by importing marble and granite for the decorative elements and employing limestone in the theatre's interior, elevated the city and its citizens in the eyes of anyone viewing the structure. This was "a city which at a time of prosperity decided to erect a theatre that was to reflect its affluence and power and in the construction of which it invested of its best resources" (Segal 1995:60).

The theatre appears to have served a religious function, providing a place for spectacles associated with religious festivals, particularly in honour of Dionysos. It is associated with other entertainment structures, such as the bath building and the *odeion*, and it is also closely linked with the various sacred structures in the area. As the patron deity of Scythopolis was Dionysos, this sacred nature of the theatre is not contradictory in any way.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

The nonverbal communication approach presented in Chapter 3 is applicable to material in the archaeological record in general and has been employed specifically in this study of Roman theatre buildings in the Near East. The cues identified in the structural components, spatial positioning, spatial patterning, and spatial interrelationships lead me to the following conclusions about the function of these structures within the urban context of early imperial cities in the region encompassed by the provinces of Palestine and Arabia. The senders and receivers can be determined, as well as the overall temporal, spatial, and cultural context in which the messages are sent. The intended meanings can be inferred, and the effects of the messages on behaviour can be revealed by means of the nonverbal communication approach.

The overall function of a theatre can be inferred from the cues embedded in the built environment, whether it is set apart from the majority of structures in a site, as at Caesarea and Gerasa, or fully integrated into the core of the city among other public buildings, as at Scythopolis. The spatial interrelationships between the theatre, the hippodrome, and the Promontory Palace at Caesarea emphasized the entertainment function of that theatre. The connection of these three structures by means of colonnaded walkways and *viridaria* would have made these interrelationships clear, creating an entertainment district. The association of the theatre and the Promontory Palace was reinforced by the orientation of the theatre towards the palace.

The interrelationships among the South Theatre, the Sanctuary of Zeus, and the Oval Plaza at Gerasa communicated the ritual function of this theatre. While the South Theatre was undoubtedly used for basic entertainment purposes, its close physical proximity to the Sanctuary of Zeus clearly aided its interpretation as a building with sacred uses. The inclusion of processions and theatrical performances in Graeco-Roman religious festivals is well established, and the use of this theatre in this capacity is supported by epigraphic evidence and by the means of accessing the structure. The evidence uncovered to date indicates that individuals approached the theatre through the sanctuary, either entering the *vomitoria* from the level of the temple podium on the upper terrace or entering the *aditus maximi* from the level of the *temenos* on the lower terrace.

The interrelationships among the structures in the city centre of Scythopolis communicated information about the functions of the large theatre. While it clearly served an entertainment purpose, the spatial associations of the theatre with the surrounding buildings also revealed another function. The location of the sacred enclosure immediately to the west of the theatre supports the use of the latter for religious festivals and performances. This function was further emphasized by the connections between the theatre and the Roman temple at the opposite end of Palladius Street. This wide colonnaded street was ideally suited for processions between the theatre and the temple. The monumental *propylaeum* leading to the Temple of Zeus Akrios on the tell was in direct alignment with Palladius Street, which supports the argument for the processional use of this street in connection with the theatre and religious performances occurring there.

The nonverbal cues embedded in the structural components, spatial positioning, and spatial interrelationships influenced the specific ways in which individuals and groups used and reacted to the theatres. These cues directed traffic flow into and out of the theatre and in the general area. The *vomitoria* and *aditus maximi* directed the theatregoers to their appropriate seats in the building. The presence of seats in the *orchestra* and the *tribunalia*, as well as the *podium* and barriers separating the *orchestra* from the *ima cavea*, served to emphasize the distinction between the dignitaries and the general masses. Gathering space located behind the *scaena* provided an appropriate area for the crowds to assemble, thereby relieving congestion in the area. Streets leading to the area of the theatre directed spectators to the building.

The cues also communicated political and social agenda. At Caesarea, Herod was courting favour with the citizens by providing them with lavish entertainment structures. He was also communicating his own importance and wealth by erecting such expensive buildings, and by connecting them to his palace. The city officials and builders of the theatres at Gerasa and Scythopolis were calling attention to their importance, as well as fostering a sense of civic pride in the population. The benefactors who contributed to the construction of the theatres were also demonstrating their status and wealth. The position and importance of the cities as a whole was exemplified by such elaborate public structures. In both cities, the prominent placement of the theatre enhanced its ability to communicate these meanings.

The presence of a theatre building was also used to influence the population to accept or maintain a particular way of life. In the case of Caesarea, Herod was attempting to Romanize the populace, as well as communicate his own love of the Roman lifestyle. By associating the theatre with his palace, Herod was making a clear

statement about his own proclivities for Roman culture, and in so doing, he was endorsing like proclivities in his subjects. At Gerasa, the builders of the theatre seem to have been projecting their Graeco-Roman lifestyle, and at Scythopolis, it appears that the upper class was trying to maintain the Hellenized way of life to which they had become accustomed. The inclusion of theatres among other prominent public structures aided the communication of this meaning.

The application of the nonverbal communication approach enhances the interpretation of the material remains, enabling one to decipher meanings embedded in the built environment. Rather than relying on preconceived assumptions, I have made a close examination of the spatial interrelationships between the theatres and their surroundings, which clarifies the functions they served and the ways in which they influenced behaviour. One is able to go beyond mere overarching statements about the use of theatres to more explicit assertions about the specific ways in which they operated. This approach has also supported the argument that topography was not the sole determining factor in the placement of theatres within sites in the Near East. Function clearly played an important role in their location. By focusing on nonverbal communication, one can isolate the intended meanings behind the construction of theatres as expressed in the cues.

There is still work to be done in the area of nonverbal communication in Roman theatre buildings in the Near East. Some of these theatres remain unexcavated, and their immediate surroundings are often overlooked or obscured by later construction. As the structures in these areas continue to be excavated, the application of the nonverbal communication approach will play a valuable role in the interpretation of the context of

the Roman theatres and the effects on behaviour of the messages embedded in the built environment.

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